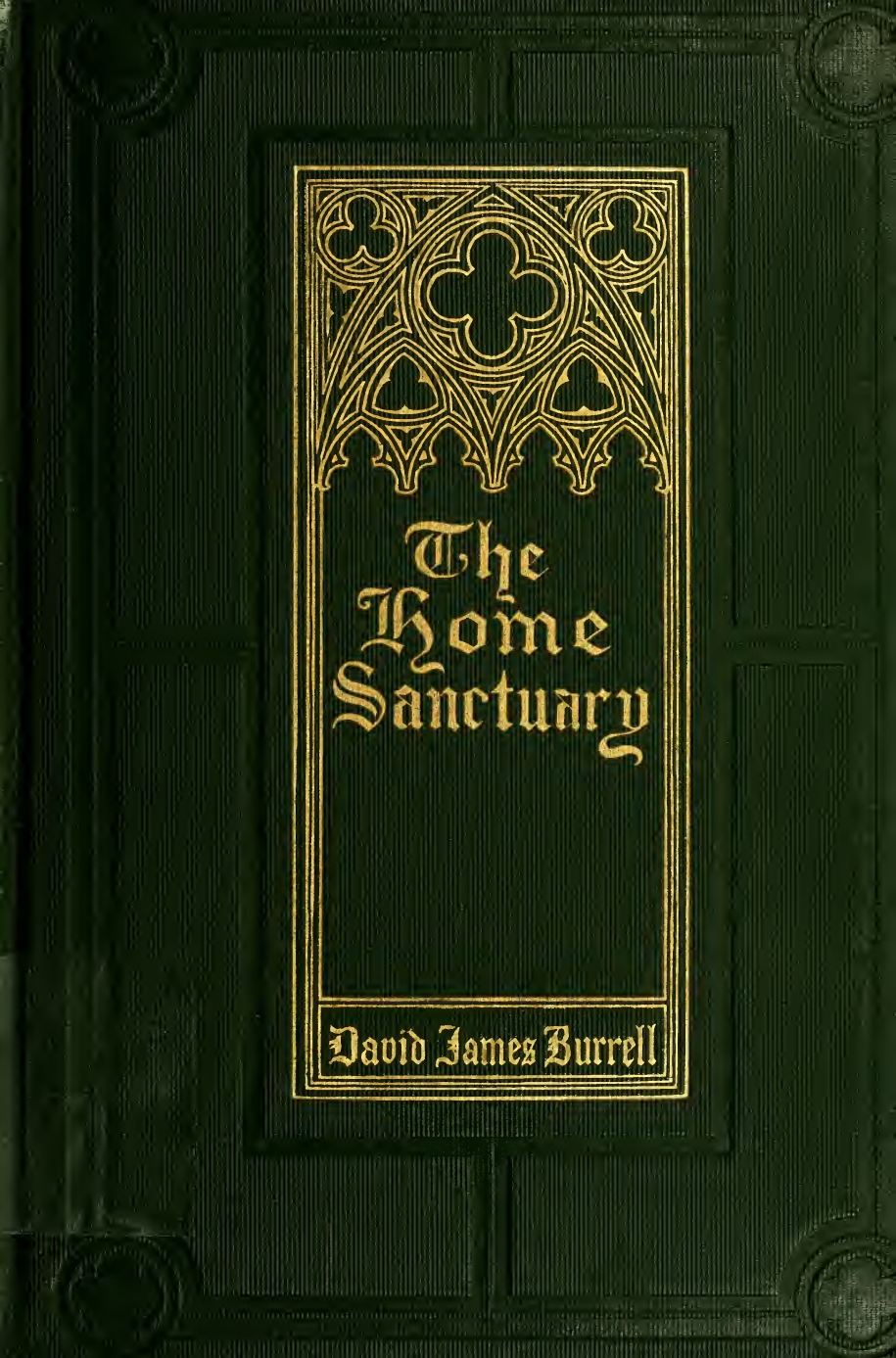

The Home Sanctuary
David James Burrell

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THE HOME SANCTUARY



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THE HOME SANCTUARY

A COMPANION VOLUME TO
THE CLOISTER BOOK
COMPLETING A YEAR OF
SERVICES FOR SHUT-IN WORSHIPERS
AND PASTORLESS CONGREGATIONS

BY
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DEDICATION

To the members of my Cloistered Congregation, who, by reason of age or sickness or homes remote, are deprived of the privileges of public worship. May they find herein some comfort for their lonely hours, some courage for the burden-bearing of their secluded lives, some touch of the friendliness of Christ.

FOREWORD

THE readers of "The Cloister Book"* will need no introduction to "The Home Sanctuary." It contains a full Order of Service for twenty-six Sabbaths, so arranged that shut-in worshipers may have not only the sermon but appropriate prayers, Scripture lessons and hymns.

While this volume is quite independent of "The Cloister Book," the two together will be found to furnish services for a year.

It is hoped that many who are deprived of the privilege of public worship may thus be enabled, in their homes, to unite in spirit with the assembled people of God.

The book may be found useful also in conducting the worship of congregations that are without pastors, the service being so arranged that any suitable person can lead it.†

* The Cloister Book: For Shut-in Worshipers and Pastorless Congregations. By David James Burrell, D.D., LL.D. Published by the American Tract Society.

† The hymns used in these services may be found in almost any of the hymn-books. They are all in "The Good News," published by the American Tract Society, 25 cents, postpaid.

There is a little lonely fold
Whose flock one Shepherd keeps
Through summer's heat and winter's cold
With eye that never sleeps.

By evil beast, or burning sky,
Or damp of midnight air,
None in that lonely flock shall die
Beneath that Shepherd's care.

For if, unheeding or beguiled,
In danger's path they roam,
His pity follows through the wild
And bears them safely home.

O gentle Shepherd, still behold
Thy helpless charge in me,
And take a wanderer to Thy fold
That trembling turns to Thee.

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FIRST SERVICE

The Home Sanctuary

1. *INVOCATION*

O GOD, be with me* and bless me, and cause thy face to shine upon me, and be gracious unto me. I invoke thy presence according to thy promise, "If ye seek me I will be found of you." Make me sensible of thy nearness and of thy willingness to bless; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "Come, thou Fount of every blessing."

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*
Job 14:1-14.
Luke 12:23-32.

4. *PRAYER*

O God, I thank thee for the privilege of calling thee Father. I thank thee for the sweet and helpful friendship of thine only-begotten Son, who has made me acquainted with thee. I pray for the filial spirit that not only loves but trusts and obeys. Make me content with my lot and ever willing to suffer

*The services in this book, like those of "The Cloister Book," are arranged for individual use; but they can easily be adapted to the needs of the Family Circle or the Congregation by changing singular pronouns to plural. In this case the prayer would be "God be with *us* and bless *us*," etc.

or to serve, as may please thee. Give me the open mind of childhood in the presence of truth; for I know that only those who become as little children shall see the Kingdom of God. Save me from the intellectual pride that insists on having its own way. Speak, Lord; thy servant heareth. What wilt thou have me to do? Is there a sick friend whom I ought especially to remember to-day? Is there a sinner in need of salvation, whom I can lead to the Saviour? I am under commission to do good as I have opportunity. Send me on errands of love, and make me ever willing and glad to go. If I can not go, let my sympathy and prayers go for me. I want to believe what thou teachest; I want to obey thy slightest wish; I want to follow in thy steps. Lead on, O blessed Master, and point the way. Make me subservient to thy holy will. Thou hast prepared a great salvation for me; help me to work it out with fear and trembling, knowing that thou workest in and through me. Forgive my sins, for Jesus' sake. Forgive my shortcomings. Forgive my near-sighted views of the great verities of the spiritual life. Forgive my apathy and indifference in the face of duty and responsibility. Give me brighter hopes, clearer visions, and holier aspirations. Be thou my great Exemplar, and enable me to draw nearer to thy likeness every day. And what I ask of thee for myself I ask also for my friends, and for

all who belong to the household of faith. Bless thy Church everywhere, and give saving power to thy Word. Come, Holy Spirit, come; and bring the seed-sowing to a glorious harvest. For Paul may plant and Apollos water; but thou alone givest the increase. Hear this prayer and grant me thy peace—that divine peace which passeth all understanding; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "Just as I am, without one plea."

6. *OFFERING**

7. *THE SERMON*

The Home Sanctuary

"Salute Prisca and Aquila, my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life laid down their own necks; and salute the church that is in their house." (Romans 16: 3-5.)

THE Church is a fact—an obvious, potential fact; a fact that must be reckoned with by any who would comprehend the logic of events. It was because Hume was unwilling to recognize the Church in its relation to progress that his "History of England" is like a labyrinth without a clue. He might as well have undertaken to prepare an exhaustive treatise on light without a reference to the sun.

The franchise of the Church is given in the

*"Upon the first day of the week, let each one of you lay by him in store as he may prosper." (1 Cor. 16:2.)

Scriptures; and on reading it we can not but be struck by its close adherence to the lines of domestic life.

At the outset we have *the Church in the house of Adam and Eve.* An altar stands in the midst of the family circle, the religious life of which is centered in the prophecy of the Seed of Woman who is expected, in the fullness of time, to bruise the serpent's head. As we follow the history of the Church along the centuries, we shall find a continuance of this seminal idea, which found expression in the blood-stained altar and the hope of the coming Christ.

In the reconstruction of things after the Deluge, we find *the Church in the house of Noah.* On the summit of Ararat, with his family about him, "he builded an altar unto the Lord and offered burnt-offerings upon it." The altar was spanned by a rainbow, which was the token of a covenant between God and his people or the transmission of the Messianic hope along the succeeding ages.

And then came *the Church in the house of Abraham.* He heard the Voice and journeyed along the Great River, building an altar at every resting-place to perpetuate the rudimental thought of blood atonement, and receiving ever and anon a renewal of the prophecy of Christ as "his Seed, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed." He saw Christ afar off and was glad.

As time passed, the simplicity of the primitive Church was succeeded by an elaborate ceremonial

code. At its center stood the temple, around which was formulated the most magnificent system of rites and ceremonies that the world ever saw. This, however, was merely temporary; its purpose being to carry on the Messianic hope until the advent of Christ. At his appearing, these provisional expedients were to vanish—vanish as darkness vanishes at the break of day.

The first Church of the Christian era was *the Church in the house of Joseph of Nazareth.* The great promise was now fulfilled. Behold the Manger in the midst of the household, and over it the shadow of the Cross!

A little later we have *the Church in the house of Mary of Jerusalem.* In an upper room sits Christ himself in the midst of his disciples. Not far away is the temple, the "house magnifical"; but over its doorway is written, "The glory is departed." The Church is not there: it is in the upper room, with its informal welcome and loving salutations.

A little farther on we come upon the apostolic group of Churches, like *that in the house of Aquila and Priscilla.* Our first acquaintance with these itinerant tent-makers is at Corinth. A year later they were at Ephesus, where there was not only a Church but a modest theological seminary in their house. After this they drifted to Philippi, where mention is again made of the Church in their house. And still later they were settled at Rome, where our text mentions the Church in their house. Other

examples of like character are "the Church in the house of Philemon" at Corinth, and "the Church in the house of Nymphas" at Laodicea.

As the centuries pass, we note a departure from the admirable simplicity of these Churches. We have pomp and pageantry; cloisters, cathedrals, and tinsel canonicals. But have we anything to show that can outvie the unpretentious beauty of holiness that marked the beginnings of Christian progress? And would it not be wise to surrender somewhat of our elaborate display in exchange for the sweet simplicity and rare fellowship of those early days?

As I sat recently near the tribune of Saint Peter's at Rome during the canonization of a saint, I was overwhelmed with the sensuous impressiveness of the service. The Pope was borne aloft in his palanquin toward the high altar, with a retinue of cardinals about him, while incense rose in fragrant clouds, and the great arches reverberated with the wonderful Gregorian chants, and all the people bowed in breathless awe. Then I remembered that it was just here, in Rome, two thousand years ago, that the Church of Christ was in the house of Aquila and Prisca, the tent-makers; and I wondered if God did not smile more complacently on that humble company of worshipers than upon those who murmur beautiful liturgies and swing golden censers in the magnificence of these last days.

I believe there is something significantly impor-

tant in this original idea of "the Church in the house." Let us see.

To begin with, observe the emphasis which it puts on *the simplicity of an acceptable approach to God.*

Our word "Church," by the way, is not found in the Scriptures. It is a pagan word, *kuriakon,* used by the Greeks with reference to the altars of their false gods. The Scriptural word for the Church is *ecclesia,* which means simply a company of people come together for divine service. It contains no suggestion of elaborate form, but rather of plainness and informality. The God whom we worship is a Spirit, and must be worshiped in spirit and in truth.

There is also in this phrase, "the Church in the house," a suggestion of *the oneness of the historic Church.*

As there is only one God, there can be only one religion; and as there is but one religion there can be but one Church. It is a mistake to speak of the Jewish Church and the Christian Church as if they were essentially different, or as if one had supplanted the other because they were somehow at odds. There never has been, and there never will be, but one Church in this world of ours.

The Church in the house of Adam and Eve was gathered about an altar that spoke eloquently of the Lamb of God; and the same is true of every assembly of true worshipers at this day. It is an error to speak of the day of Pentecost as "the birth-

day of the Christian Church." On that occasion the Church, which had been from the beginning, received a baptism of fire and power, by the descent of the Spirit, for the carrying on of the great work of the Kingdom of God.

We have, also, a side-light here into *the normal diversity which prevails in the Church of these days.*

I have a friend who built for himself, years ago, a home on the upper Hudson. As his children grew up and were married, one by one, he declined to receive them under the paternal roof, but instead built for each happy pair a separate home nearby. And therein he showed himself a wise man; for true is the proverb, "Fences make good neighbors." A man of less discernment might have insisted that his children and grandchildren should abide under the same roof with him; just as there are people who clamor for ecclesiastical uniformity, and mourn because the denominations are called by different names. But this was not the thought of our Father when he "set the solitary in families."

We are made, like sheep, to segregate: like seeks like. We shall never all agree; but in the good time coming we shall agree to differ. There is room for a difference of opinion in matters of doctrine—not, however, as to the great fundamentals, such as the virgin birth of Jesus, on which rests his Messianic claim, or the vicarious Atonement, on which rests the world's hope of salvation, or the miracle of Christ's Resurrection, by which life and

immortality are brought to light, but on minor points, which are in no wise necessary to the integrity of our faith.

And there is room also for a difference of opinion in matters of polity. There must, as a matter of course, be law and order in the Church; but Scripture has little to say of forms of government: these are most largely left to us. Some believe in prelatical, others in presbyterial, and still others in independent forms of government. Why not let all suit themselves? It is the way of the world. Do we lament the fact that some secular states are monarchical, others republican, and still others democratic? Are we foolish enough to urge that this interferes with the solidarity of the race? Why, then, should we be troubled on account of minor divisions in the Church, or why should we endeavor, by mechanical compression, to bring about abnormal uniformity instead of falling in with the sensible view of the household of God?

We are, furthermore, reminded here of *the true fellowship which should prevail in the Church.*

We sing "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love." But what is that tie? It is not our common acceptance of the Fatherhood of God. The doctrine of the divine Fatherhood is not peculiar to Christianity. It was recognized centuries ago in the Norse mythology, where we read of "Al-fadir," the Father of All. It may be doubted if there is any of the false religions, except Confucianism, which does not suggest it. But

the singular and differentiating fact in Christianity is its belief in the brotherhood of Christ. He is "the first-born among many brethren," the Elder Brother of us all. "For this cause," says Paul, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Thus Christ, as the manifestation of the Father, is our bond of union.

And this is the touchstone of legitimacy in the household of God. There is a proverb which emanates from the Vatican, *Ubi ecclesia, ibi Christus,*—that is, "Where the Church is, there is Christ,"—but precisely the reverse is true: where Christ is there is the Church. For in any Church which is truly Christian he is first, last, midst and all in all.

And with this bond of fellowship goes *the thought of equality.*

There are no "holy orders" in the True Church. The word "laity" is not found in the Scriptures. There is indeed a distinct call to the ministry; but it permits no pride of station, as if men in canonicals were appointed to lord it over God's heritage. The true idea of the ministry was set forth in the Master's words, "The Son of man is come not to be ministered unto but to minister"; and it was exemplified in the upper room where he girded himself with a towel and washed his disciples' feet, saying, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." The supercilious affectation of greatness and pontifical precedence on the part of certain functionaries of the

Church is at an infinite remove from the conception of their office which was in the mind of Christ when he said, "He that would be greatest among you, let him be servant of all."

As there is no distinction between clergy and laity in point of superiority, so there is no room in this atmosphere for the adventitious distinctions of social life. This is the one place on earth where rich and poor should meet together and acknowledge the Lord as Maker of them all. For the Church is a family circle; it is the household of God. The recognition of that fact is not always easy, in view of certain conditions that prevail among us; but it is always wise, because it prepares us for the fellowship of our Father's house. We are fond of speaking of the recognition of friends in heaven; but why not more of such recognitions here and now?

Still further, in this domestic conception of Church life *we best realize the thought of co-operation.*

The ultimate purpose aimed at is the conquest of the world. To that end we are trying to persuade the world to come and worship with us. This is one of our great problems: how to get the people everywhere to honor the ringing of the church-bell. But suppose we return to the thought of Christ himself, which was not to get the house to the Church, but to get the Church to the house.

His great word was, "Go." He was constantly urging his disciples to go out as fishers of men. He

had little or nothing to say about "the regeneration of society" or of the community, but much to say about the rescue of one. Welcome the day when the people shall no longer stand in their church-doors with words of welcome, but venture forth to the capture of prisoners of hope!

The Church of the dark ages was lost in spiritual torpor and corruption till the call of the crusades was heard, "God wills it!" whereupon forces were set in motion that ultimately brought the Reformation to pass. Go, therefore; go out into the highways and hedges; go to the uttermost parts of the earth: it matters little where you go, so that you go somewhere for the Master in the quest of souls.

To this work the Church in the house is *perfectly adjusted.*

A sacerdotalist, on hearing this, would be likely to say, "Your Church in the house has no organization." No organization? It has the best in the world. It is the living organism which Ezekiel saw in his vision, of which every household is a wheel, and the Spirit moves within them all.

A Church operating from one great center or from a few splendid centers of radiating power is not calculated to bring the world to God. I remember when it was thought that the best illumination for our cities was furnished by a great arc-light shining from a steel tower in some central square; but we have learned that the best street-lighting is by lamps at frequent intervals, or by lights shining from many windows and open door-

ways. It is not the great temples and cathedrals of the world that are controlling the enterprises of Christ's Kingdom. The saving factor of Christian progress is in "the back districts," where congregations gather in humble places of worship, often in schoolhouses at the cross-roads. Here descends the promise, "Where two or three are met together in my name, there will I be."

This is our coign of vantage in the work of the kingdom. Let us realize that the Church is the family of God. Let it be understood that he cares little for elaborate form and ceremony, but much for the simple beauty of holiness. The man who issues from the Church in the House with a sickle in hand and his face toward the harvest-field is greater, in God's sight, than a procession of hierophants in purple canonicals. I believe that a truer conception of the Church along the lines originally marked out for it would mean a mighty impulse in universal evangelization.

We are looking forward to the Millennium, when Christ shall reign over all nations and peoples of the earth. It will be heralded by the descent of the Tabernacle of God. The dreamer in Patmos saw no temple in heaven, and he saw no temple on earth in the latter day; but he heard a voice prophesying that the tabernacle, the old "tent of meeting," should descend upon the earth, and that the God of glory would abide therein; saying, "The tabernacle of God shall be with men and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people:

yea, God himself shall be with them and be their God."

8. *PRAYER*

Blessed be thy name, O gracious Father, for the assurance of the things which thou hast prepared for them that love thee. Help me to live so well, so patiently, so usefully, here and now, that I may be found worthy of promotion to larger tasks in heaven; for thy Name's sake. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "From every stormy wind that blows."

10. *BENEDICTION*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you. Amen.

SECOND SERVICE

The Palm-Tree

1. *INVOCATION*

WHAT shall I render unto thee, O Lord, for all thy benefits? I will take the cup of thy salvation and pay unto thee my solemn vows. Help me to dedicate myself anew to thy service. Here, Lord, I give myself to thee; 'tis all that I can do. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "The morning light is breaking."

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Psalm 92.
John 15:1-11.

4. *PRAYER*

O God who dwellest in light and glory unapproachable, there is no measuring thy knowledge, because all things are naked and open before thee. Thine eyes run to and fro through all the earth to behold the evil and the good. Thou seest into the heart of every mystery, so that even the darkness is light before thee. I pray that thou wilt have compassion upon my ignorance. I am living down here in the valleys of mist and shadow, com-

passed about by problems which I can not solve. Truth comes like a far-off brightness, glimmering through the twilight of doubt. Have pity on my poor, blinking eyes. Give me clearer vision. Help me to see Christ, who said, "I am the truth," and to find in sitting at his feet the key that opens all the mysteries of life. Enable me to be silent when he speaks, and may his word be an end of all controversy. If he says thou art my Father, help me to believe it and henceforth obey thee in filial love. If he says the Bible is true, help me to receive it as my infallible rule of faith and practice, whatever others may say. If he assures me of salvation by faith, help me to rest in that assurance and fear no more. If he bids me work in his vineyard, help me to get busy at once in my appointed place. Forgive my sins and shortcomings for his sake, and make me ever more and more careful to keep thy holy law. Remember all my friends, particularly those who suffer in mind, body, or estate. Go out, O thou seeking Saviour, after all who wander on the dark mountains. Bless those who minister in thy Name, and touch their lips with heavenly fire, that they may preach the simple Gospel with power to save. Remember those who are in authority and enable them to rule righteously. Hasten the day when the kings of the earth shall bring their honor and their glory unto thee.

Hasten the coming of the time when no man shall need to say to his neighbor, "Know thou the Lord," because all shall know thee from the least to the greatest. Show thyself in thy majesty, O King of kings and Lord of lords, and ride gloriously through this sin-stricken and suffering world. And the praise and power and dominion shall be thine forever and ever. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "In the Cross of Christ I glory."

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

The Palm-Tree

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree." (Psalm 92.)

THE Psalter was the Hymn-book of the Jews. It contains one hundred and fifty devotional lyrics, of which eighty are ascribed to David, "the master-singer"; twelve to Asaph, the choir-leader; fourteen to the "sons of Korah," a family of sacerdotal poets; two to Solomon; and one to Moses. The others are anonymous, among them this ninety-second. It is entitled "A Song for the Sabbath." In its opening verse it strikes the major key, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto Jehovah!"

Though the author's name is unknown, we may be sure that he belonged to the school of nature-

lovers, who hear voices everywhere and are able to interpret them. For it is a true saying, "There are so many voices in the world, and none of them is without signification." At night this minstrel heard the stars singing, "The Hand that made us is divine!" In the fields the flowers preached to him of the beneficent wisdom of their Creator. Like the exiled duke in the Forest of Arden, he found "tongues in trees"; the rugged oak, the pliant willow and the lofty pine all speaking with voices of their own. If he trudged through the desert, staff in hand, the lonely palm-tree broke the silence with its homily: "Pause, traveler; let me tell thee of The Righteous Man!"

The three factors of Righteousness are Strength, Beauty and Usefulness. Behold them in the palm-tree!

First, *Strength.* Its roots are so deep beneath the earth that it can venture with its sinewy trunk and gallant fronds to cleave the upper air. It defies the sirocco, before which other trees would snap like pipe-stems, saying, "Bend me you may; but break me, never!"

The great Humboldt, viewing a group of palm-trees on their native heath, exclaimed, "Mark how yon pillars seem to be upholding the sky!"

Secondly, *Beauty.* Observe its stately grace, its lines of symmetry. Little wonder that Solomon in the building of the "House Magnifical" adorned its walls with carvings of palm-trees, overlaid its doors with gold spread upon palm branches, and

supported its porch with two pillars crowned with lily-work, typifying strength and beauty, after the similitude of the palm! Even so,—

> The plants of grace shall ever live;
> Nature decays, but grace doth thrive;
> Time, that doth all things else impair,
> Still makes them flourish strong and fair.

Thirdly, *Usefulness*. The Arab who lives in the shelter of the palm is wont to speak of its three hundred uses. There are trees that always take and never give, living on the fructifying factors of the soil but yielding no return, good only for the woodman's ax. But give the Bedouin his palm and he is content to let the world sweep by.

> To him the tree is a gift divine,
> Wherein all uses of man combine,
> House and raiment and food and wine.
>
> Of threads of palm was the carpet spun
> Whereon he kneels when the day is done
> And the foreheads of Islam are bowed as one.
>
> And in the hour of his great release
> His need of the palm shall only cease
> With the shroud wherein he lieth in peace.
>
> "Allah il Allah!" he sings his psalm
> On the Indian Sea by the isles of balm;
> "Thanks to Allah who gives the palm!"

So flourishes the palm-tree. In the face of rioting storms it glories in strength. In a scene of naked desolation it presents a vision of surpassing grace. In a dry and thirsty land where no water

is, it bids the weary traveler "Rest and be thankful."

And, behold, "the righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree."

I. *His strength is the strength of faith.*

His faith is rooted and grounded in truth. One who can say "I know" can also say "I stand"; for as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

The Word of God is the authority for the Christian's faith; wherefore he can confidently say, "He only is my rock and my salvation; I shall not be greatly moved!" As the palm-tree stands before the sirocco, gently swaying and bending but ever righting itself, so the righteous man, while controversies rage on every side, rests in "the eye of the storm." He has duly considered the problems of faith in the light of Revelation, and has formed convictions that are proof against the fashions and opinions of the world about him.

He has chosen his way at the bidding of his Master, and the shouting of the crowd can not swerve him. He has committed his soul to the guidance of One who makes no mistakes; wherefore he is able to affirm, "I know Him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard that which I have committed unto Him against that day!" He has no armor of his own; but, panoplied in the whole armor of God—girdle of truth, breastplate of righteousness, sandals of the preparation of the Gospel, shield of faith, helmet of salvation

and sword of the Spirit—he is able to withstand in the evil day and, having done all, to stand. In no spirit of bravado, but of humble dependence on the Omnipotence by which he is buttressed, he plants himself upon his convictions, saying, "Here I stand; I can not otherwise; God help me!"

The strength of the Christian is downward and upward. His aspirations are measured by his creed. He is an idealist because he is a realist. He is an optimist because he is a believer. He hopes for heaven because he knows he is living in God's world here and now. He is ambitious to make the most of himself because he has surrendered himself to the mastery of Christ. The roots of his faith are deep down in divine grace; wherefore the stamen of the character is superior to adversity and his virtues grow upward like the fronds of the palm; as it is written, "if ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

II. *His beauty is the beauty of holiness.*

The one green thing in the desert is the palm-tree. It lifts its fronds so far above the arid waste that, when the strength of the simoom is spent, there is no trace of dust upon its foliage. So does the Christian seek to keep himself "unspotted from the world." He is in the world, yet not of it.

This is the ideal; it never was realized, however, save once. Christ was a Christian. He was the One Christian of all history in whom the world finds "no fault at all."

All others are simply measuring up to him. We count not ourselves to have apprehended; but this one thing we do: forgetting the things which are behind, we press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Our high calling is his "Come up higher!" From the stain of past sin he has cleansed us by his blood; from its penalty he has delivered us by his vicarious sacrifice; from its bondage he would fain free us. His word is, "Sin no more!" And this is possible to those who realize his ever-present help. No sin is unavoidable. Indeed, no sin is possible except as we fling him off. The moment a Christian parts company with Christ his strength to resist goes from him. So long as he continues with Christ he is striving to be like him. This is character. The likeness of Christ is the beauty of holiness.

And the beauty of holiness, like that of the palm-tree, is perennial. The summers of prosperity and the winters of adversity are alike to it. If all goes well, it makes merry and thanks God; if the skies lower and the winds blow it braces itself for struggle and still thanks God. What says the Psalmist of the righteous man? "He shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season; whose leaf also doth not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

One of the best definitions of the Christian is that of Milton, "He who can consider vice with all her baits and yet refrain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer, that which is better, he is a true Christian."

We are bound to keep on living in a sinful world; but "to refrain, to distinguish and to choose that which is better," this is to live as Christ lived, to live as a Christian should, to be in the world yet not of it.

III. *His usefulness is the usefulness of service.*

He "serves the Lord Christ"; and, by the same token, he is "debtor unto all." The rule of his life is the Golden Rule.

> That man may breathe but never lives,
> Who much receives but nothing gives,
> Whom none can praise, whom none can thank;
> Creation's blot, creation's blank.

In our Lord's last interview with his disciples he gave them a parable containing in brief the philosophy of the Christian life: "I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for apart from me ye can do nothing." In this parable he emphasizes again and again the importance of fruitfulness—"fruit"—"much fruit"—for "herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."

What is this fruit? "The fruit of the Spirit," we are told, "is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control: against such there is no law"; and again, "As we have opportunity let us work that which is good toward all men."

So runs the Sermon of the Palm-Tree.

And the secret of its strength, beauty and useful-

ness is not far to seek. No sooner does the shoot leave the parent seed than it begins prospecting for the spring. Downward it makes its way, down and ever farther down, until it finds the living stream; and thenceforth it lives and thrives upon it.

In like manner the Christian finds the source of his spiritual life in Christ.

He is strong only in the strength of Christ; as Paul testifies, "I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak then am I strong"; and again, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Corinthians 12:9-10.)

He is holy so far forth as he succeeds in imitating the character of Christ, and no farther: wherefore Peter exhorts us to become "partakers of the divine nature" through the experimental knowledge of Christ; adding, "And for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-control; and in your self-control patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:5-8.)

And the usefulness of the Christian is measured by his co-operation with Christ in the work of his

kingdom. The coming of Christ into our world was for the purpose of ultimately establishing a kingdom of truth and righteousness on the ruins of sin. He said to his disciples, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." This, then, is the business of all Christians, to hasten the coming of the Kingdom. All other interests must be subordinated to this; as he said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." Wealth is nothing, pleasure is nothing, earthly emoluments are nothing, in comparison. All such works as hasten the coming of the Kingdom are "good works"; and these were in the mind of the Master when he said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."

So Christ is all. He is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Our strength, beauty and usefulness are in him.

The enigma of our life is quaintly solved by George Herbert in this wise:

Jesu is in my heart, his sacred name
Is deeply carved there. But the other week
A great affliction broke the little frame
E'en all to pieces; which I went to seek.
And first I found the corner where was J
After where was ES, and next where U was graved.
When I had got these parcels, instantly
I sat me down to spell them, and perceived
That to my broken heart, He was *I ease you;*
And to my whole heart is JESU.

This, then, is the peroration of the Sermon of the Palm-Tree: "Blessed are they whose lives are hid with Christ in God."

8. *PRAYER*

Father in Heaven, be pleased to sanctify me wholly by the indwelling of thy Spirit. Help me to grow daily in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Grant that my whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto his coming, and that, awaking in his likeness, I may dwell forever with him. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "Guide me, O thou great Jehovah!"

10. *BENEDICTION*

The Lord bless thee and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace. Amen.

THIRD SERVICE

The Foolishness of Solomon

1. *INVOCATION*

O LORD, thou hast promised to be nigh unto all that call upon thee. Help me now to lift up holy hands with my heart unto thee in the heavens; and be pleased to bow thy heavens and come down unto me. Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer! Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty."

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

2 Chronicles 1:1-12.
Luke 11:29-54.

4. *PRAYER*

O Lord, help me to forget myself to-day. Thou knowest how many things I need: pardon and sanctifying grace, patience in suffering, light and power and holy zeal; and thou lovest me enough to grant them all. But I am thinking, Lord, of those who are in deeper distress than mine. Oh, pity the sick, the

lonely and discouraged. Go up and down the aisles of hospitals, and lay thy gentle, healing hand on those who languish on restless beds. Thou art the great Physician; there is healing in thy touch. And have compassion on those who continue in their sins, because they know thee not. Thou wast wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, that by thy stripes we might be healed; but, Lord, there are millions on millions in the world who have never heard this good news. Thy people have known it for nineteen hundred years, and have not sufficiently told it. Thou didst give them the message and bid them carry it to the uttermost parts of the earth; but they have stopped short. There are regions beyond still waiting and dying for want of it. Send abroad thy mighty Gospel. Stimulate thy Church to carry it even to the last man. Enable me to do my part. Mine is only a little parish; but help and strengthen me to be faithful in it. Bless all those who minister in the pulpits of the world to-day. Keep them loyal to thy Word and to the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Anoint their eyes that they may see the full glory of the Gospel, and touch their lips with fire that they may faithfully and effectually declare it. Open the hearts of the people, that they may joyously receive it, and incline their steps to a consistent walk. So glorify thyself this day, O

Lord, in all thy servants and in me; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "He that goeth forth with weeping."

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

The Foolishness of Solomon

"And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite and Heman and Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the nations round about." (1 Kings 4: 29-31.)

THE wisdom of Solomon is proverbial. It was a heavenly gift. The youthful king, on the day of his coronation, made this prayer: "O my God, I am but a little child. I know not how to rule this so great people. I know not how to go out or come in before thee. Give me, therefore, an understanding heart." The answer came as a matter of course; for here is the promise, "If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." (James 1-5.)

As Solomon eventually did many foolish and wicked things, it is important to ascertain the nature of this wisdom with which he was so richly endowed. Obviously it had its limitations. We

shall see, if I mistake not, that it had little or nothing to do with that spiritual wisdom that has for its supreme end the perfection of character and the attainment of eternal life.

I. *He was a scientist;* probably the leading scientist of his time. "He spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; He spake also of beasts and of birds and of creeping things and of fishes." It has even been inferred from his reference to the loosing of the silver cord and the breaking of the golden bowl, and to the pitcher at the fountain and the wheel at the cistern, that as an anatomist he was acquainted with the intricate functions of our physical life, such as the circulation of the blood, thus anticipating Harvey's discovery by some thousands of years.

II. *He was a philosopher also.*

While the business of a scientist is to discover and assemble facts, that of the philosopher is to get back of those facts and discover their causes. This is precisely what Solomon did; "I applied my heart," he says, "to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven." There is a tradition that his manuscripts fell into the hands of Aristotle, who derived from them the rudimental principles of a system of philosophy which is current even in these days.

III. *He was furthermore a master of literature.* His reign is as celebrated in Jewish history

as is the Augustan Age in Roman history. He built a royal library, known as "The House of Wisdom." Whether he insisted on having his name written over its doorway is not known; but it probably contained a famous collection of scrolls in many tongues. He was not only a generous patron of learning, but a voluminous author as well. He wrote three thousand proverbs, truths compressed into portable form and convenient for the needs of common life. He wrote a thousand and five poems; among them an Epithalamium, which is rightly called "The Song of Songs." Who has ever sung so sweetly of the springtime?

> My beloved spake and said unto me,
> "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away!
> For lo, the winter is past;
> The rain is over and gone;
> The flowers appear on the earth;
> The time of the singing of birds is come,
> And the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land.
> The fig-tree ripeneth her green figs,
> And the vines are in blossom;
> They give forth their fragrance.
> Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away!"

IV. *He was a master of economics, too;* particularly of that personal sort of economics which used to be called "Merchantry," or the art of feathering one's own nest. He was the prince of merchant princes. He had at Ezion-geber an extensive shipyard, from which his fleets sailed out to Ophrah and Sheba, bearing wine and cereals in return for the commodities of those distant lands.

This maritime traffic, besides an extensive commerce with Egypt and Phœnicia and the Valley of the Euphrates, was under his personal control. Wealth poured into his exchequer. He built for himself a magnificent palace, which had pillars of cedar crowned with capitals of gold, and a thousand golden shields suspended on its outer walls. His feasts were superb: the drinking vessels were of gold; none were of silver, because "silver was nothing thought of." The daily allowance of his household was a hundred sheep and thirty oxen, with hart and fallow deer and fatted fowl. His gardens were called "paradises"; his stables were furnished with four thousand stalls. It is difficult, in these times of republican simplicity, to form a just conception of so magnificent an establishment. But grander than all was the king himself sitting on his ivory throne or riding forth in his chariot of state, scepter in hand, sword upon thigh, guards surrounding him, his robes perfumed with myrrh and aloes and his hair powdered with dust of gold. Such was the personage who has passed into history as "Solomon in all his glory."

V. But the wisdom with which he was particularly endowed was such as he needed for the governing of "this so great a people." *He was pre-eminent in statecraft—a great lawmaker, a great judge, and a great administrator.* He saw to it that the various functions of his government—legislative, judicial and executive—were all centered in him. The years of his administration were char-

acterized by an unwonted peace and an unparalleled prosperity. His people "dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beer-sheba." The king's name was itself a salaam: "Shelomoh," the peaceful. The neighboring tribes were either allied in friendly intercourse or held in check by a vigorous display of force. This was indeed Israel's Golden Age.

But here we call a halt. The wisdom of Solomon was not omniscience. It is recorded that the Queen of Sheba, hearing of his wisdom, came a distance of fifteen hundred miles to prove him with hard questions; and he seemed to her a very encyclopedia of knowledge insomuch that she said, "It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thine acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it, and, behold, the half was not told me!" Nevertheless, had this pagan queen been moved to question him along some of the lines of higher thinking, she must have discovered that his wisdom broke down at the vital point. For indeed he was in many ways "the wisest, brightest, meanest, of mankind." With all his knowledge, there were many of the most important things of which he had practically no knowledge at all.

(1) He did not know God. It is true he knew much about him. He could have talked theology by the hour, and orthodox theology at that; but practically he did not know God. He did indeed build a temple for the worship of Jehovah, prob-

ably the most magnificent sanctuary ever seen in this world. And he was scrupulous in paying his devotions there. He was most generous in oblations and sacrifices. If God could be satisfied with the fat of rams and fed beasts, then Solomon was an exceedingly pious man. Yet with all this pomp and circumstance of worship his religion was mere make-believe. The proof is on record: "He loved the Lord, only he sacrificed and burned incense in the high places." Observe the fatal significance of that word "only." There were shrines and altars on all the surrounding hills, some left over from preceding reigns, but many more erected by him, in honor of pagan gods. Like Redwald the Saxon, he faced both ways. And all the while he wore upon his forehead the *shema* on which was inscribed, "Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt have no other gods before him!"

(2) Nor did he believe in immortality. In all his writings there is nothing to indicate that he expected to live anywhere except here and now. Listen to this: "The sun ariseth and the sun goeth down and hasteth to its place where it ariseth. The wind goeth about continually in the course and the wind returneth again to its circuits. All the rivers run into the sea."—"Then said I in my heart, as it happeneth to the fool, so will it happen even to me. . . . There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink and make his soul enjoy good in his labor. . . . For that

which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; as the one dieth, so dieth the other. . . . All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all return to dust again. . . . Wherefore I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his works; for who shall bring him back to see what shall be after him? . . . Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher: all is vanity." Job, Moses, David and other of the ancient worthies had spoken of a life farther on; and they lived accordingly, as if they were expecting it. But Solomon invested his assets for present pleasure and emolument. God once gave to Abraham a great command with promise, saying, "Get thee out of thy country and from thy father's house unto the land that I will show thee"; and we know that he believed that promise from the fact that as he journeyed along the Euphrates he built no abiding-place by the way, but dwelt in tents, as one "looking for a better country." By the same token we know that Solomon had no practical thought of immortality, because he lived as if this life were all.

(3) He was singularly regardless of the principles which underlie moral character. His three thousand proverbs, like the maxims of "Poor Richard," have to do chiefly with temporal things: such as, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard: consider her ways and be wise." The substance of them is, "Be virtuous and you will be happy." He doubtless knew the rules of right conduct; but they were not interwoven with the fiber of his life. He had

impressions, but apparently no convictions. He had much to say about personal purity and the avoidance of strange women; yet in his own harem there were seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. "O Solomon," cries Bishop Hall, "where was thy wisdom while thy vain affections were running away with thee into such vile voluptuousness? Thine eye might be clear; but thy hand was palsied. How many a man have I known whose head was thus broken with his own rib!"

(4) He had, furthermore, no practical acquaintance with benevolence. His life was self-centered to the last degree. He wrote many proverbs with reference to the "square deal"; but in business everything was grist that came to his mill. He lived apparently without regard for the other man. "His god was his belly and his glory was in his shame." He formed an industrial alliance with Hiram of Tyre which quite eclipsed all the capitalistic combines of these days. That was a great syndicate: "Solomon & Hiram." They "cornered" the commodities of the world. They stretched forth Briarian hands and gathered in the treasures of all lands and seas.

(5) But, most important of all, Solomon was practically as oblivious of "the Hope of Israel" as if he had never heard of it. The Hope of Israel was the coming of Christ. The Oracles were full of it. The Lord had set apart Israel as a chosen people to keep these Oracles and hand down their Messianic prophecy to succeeding ages. In the

farewell charge of David to Solomon he said: "I am going the way of all the earth: be thou strong, therefore, and show thyself a man; and keep the charge of Jehovah thy God." But Solomon was recreant to that charge. He forgot the Oracles, and, so far as the records show, utterly forgot that Christ was coming. In all his writings you will not find the faintest gleam of the Messianic hope. Had he been loyal to his trust, the people for whom he was officially responsible might never have crucified Christ! But he defaulted. His confession is in the Book of Ecclesiastes, where, after swinging around the whole circle of sordid pursuits and pleasures, he records the utter vanity of life. Not even in that confession does he betray the faintest hope of the coming of Christ or the slightest regard for the charge which had been so solemnly committed to him. The best that he can say is, "Vanity of vanities: all is vanity! This is the end of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man."

There is nothing sadder than the story of Solomon's fall,—so gloriously endowed, so splendidly equipped, so singularly blessed, yet going down to his grave with "Wise Fool" written across his brow. *Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin!* We have seen Adam hiding his shame among the trees of the garden; Noah, drunken and uncovered at noonday; Samson, blind and bound with fetters, grinding like a woman at the mill; David, playing the idiot and scrabbling on the gates of Gath; but

never was a sadder or more painful sight than this: Solomon among his concubines, spending his strength in sensuous pleasure and bowing before the smoking altars of false gods.

So fallen, so lost! The light withdrawn
Which once he wore;
The glory from his gray hairs gone
Forevermore.
Of all we loved and honored naught
Save power remains;
A fallen angel's pride of thought
Still strong in chains.
All else is gone. From those great eyes
The soul has fled.
When faith is lost, when honor dies,
The man is dead!
Then pay the reverence of old days
To his dead fame;
Walk backward with averted gaze,
And hide the shame!

We are told of One who claimed to be "a greater than Solomon." His training had been in a carpenter shop. In his preaching he had little to say of science or philosophy or literature or economics or statecraft, but much about truth and righteousness. God, immortality, character and usefulness filled the horizons of his life. "I am the way," said he, "and the truth and the life: no one cometh unto the Father but by me." He claimed to be the Wisdom that "standeth at the corner of the street," with riches in his left hand and in his right length of days. Happy is the man that findeth wisdom in

him! Aye, and he too is wiser than Solomon; because to sit as a disciple at Jesus' feet is to be "wise toward God."

On one occasion the Great Teacher took a child upon his knee and, looking around upon the assembled company, said something which is of more practical importance than all the three thousand proverbs of Solomon rolled into one. It was this: "Verily I say unto you: Except ye turn and become as little children"—in simplicity, freedom from guile, docile humility and faith—"ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven."

8. *PRAYER*

> O God, make me wise unto salvation. Give me light for my journey, step by step. There are many things which I can not know; but I must know thee. For this is life eternal—to know thee, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. Wherefore be pleased to unveil thyself unto me. Show me thy fullness in Christ; for thy Name's sake. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "How firm a foundation."

10. *BENEDICTION*

> Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless in the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory forever. Amen.

FOURTH SERVICE

The Poverty of Cræsus

1. *INVOCATION*

HOW amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts. My soul longeth, yea, fainteth, for thy courts. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Quicken me, and I will call upon thy name. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Draw nigh, that I may commune with thee; and thy name shall have continual praise. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "All hail the power of Jesus' Name!"

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Proverbs 30:1-9.
Luke 12:13-34.

4. *PRAYER*

To thee, O God, be praise and honor and thanksgiving for all thy benefits. I thank thee for life; for in thee I live and move and have my being. If thou wert to withdraw thy hand for a moment I should sink into nothingness, as when a drop of dew exhales into the air. I thank thee for all that makes life worth living: for home and kinship and loving

friends; for happiness and hope and the opportunity of doing good. Give me, I pray thee, a right conception of life. Forbid that I should bound it by the narrow circumscriptions of time and space. I am made in thy likeness, wherefore I can not die. I met thee on my birthday, and, behold! I go on with thee forever. Blessed be thy name for life and immortality brought to light in the Gospel. And blessed be thy name for constant aid as I journey toward the immortal life. Pardon my sins, for Jesus' sake; that I may go without dragging a hopeless chain after me. Sanctify me by thy Spirit, that I may run joyously in the way of thy commandments. Enlarge my heart, that I may do good as I have opportunity unto all men. Give me a clear vision of Christ, the great Exemplar, and enable me to grow daily more and more like him. Bless all thy people, of whatever name or tongue, who worship in thy courts to-day. Look graciously on the sick and suffering; and enable them to realize that all things work together for good to them that love thee. Incline the hearts of those who know thee not to come running unto thee. Show them thy beauty in the face of thy beloved Son, so that he shall appear as the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely. Send thy Gospel to the regions beyond, to those who dwell in darkness and the shadow

of death. Give them the light of the great salvation, O thou God of all the children of men, and bring them speedily to thy feet, a nation in a day. Let thy word, wherever it is taught or preached, run and be glorified. Let thy grace be magnified in the conversion of multitudes. Make use of all Christians as fishers of men, and make me willing to be used that way. Hear and answer, Father of all mercy; not for any worth or worthiness of mine, but because I ask in the all-prevailing name of Christ, my divine Brother and thy beloved Son. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "There is a Fountain filled with Blood."

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

The Poverty of Crœsus

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ: even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love; having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will; to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. (Eph. 1: 2-7.)

OUT of the dim shadows of the past emerges the figure of Crœsus, the King of ancient Lydia. His claim to immortality lies in the fact that he was the richest of men. "As rich as Crœsus" is a current proverb even in these days. But, notwithstanding his immense wealth, all did not go well with him. Of his two sons one was born dumb and the other was slain in early youth. This man had everything that gold could purchase; yet his life was not worth living. His crown being lost in battle, he passed his declining years in lonely exile. His funeral was celebrated with splendid pomp and circumstance. Tradition says that his personal possessions were heaped together and burned in a lofty pyre: over it towered a cloud of smoke, while from beneath issued a stream of molten gold. So passes the dream of treasure. Poor Crœsus! He brought nothing into this world and carried nothing out of it.

I see another figure, in striking contrast with this: an old man, bearing in his body the scars of many scourgings, chained to his Roman guard, poor and lonely, shivering for the want of an old cloak which he had left at Troas in more prosperous days; yet protesting, "I have all and abound!" His life has been passed "in labor and travail, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness"; yet he is content and happy, "as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things." This man was rich—aye, richer than Crœsus; because he was rich toward God!

He was now writing to a company of other poor folk at Ephesus. His letter might appropriately be entitled "The Riches of Grace." In it he gives the inventory of his possessions, of things that gold could not buy.

All these have come to him through grace; that is, the unmerited favor of God.

> For merit lives from man to man,
> But never, Lord, from man to thee.

It is the "unearned increment" that makes our millionaires. (If their only wealth were such as had been acquired in accordance with the primal law of nature, "by the sweat of thy face," it would in most cases be an easy matter to count it.) God's millionaires are made in the same way; and this Paul the prisoner was one of them.

His sign manual was "grace." His balance-sheet was an account of Profit and Loss. All that he had ever earned was entered as loss; and his only profit was the unearned increment which God had graciously bestowed upon him. He had some skill as a tent-maker, perhaps some modest savings laid by for a rainy day, a considerable amount of book learning as a university graduate and pupil of the illustrious Gamaliel, a valuable franchise of Roman citizenship, and an honorable position as chief inquisitor under the Jewish Sanhedrin. By most men such acquisitions are treasured as holdings; but Paul did not so estimate them. "Yea, verily," he says, "I count all things to be loss for

the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse that I may gain Christ and be found in him!" He laid everything of this sort at the feet of Jesus when he entered into covenant with him.

So much for the "loss"; what was the profit? It was briefly comprehended in one word; "that I may win CHRIST and be found in him." In Christ he found a competence and an independent fortune. "All things are yours," he wrote to the Corinthians, "whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

In our text he itemizes the Riches of Grace.

The first item is Redemption—"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses."

The word "redemption" means a buying back. Paul thinks of himself as having been "sold under sin"; but, having been bought back out of this bondage, he has entered into "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

And this is altogether of grace; or, as he puts it, "according to the riches of his grace wherein he hath abounded toward us." A few years before he wrote this letter, while preaching in Jerusalem, he had been arrested, carried to the castle of Antonia and delivered to the scourge. At this juncture he quietly asked, "Is it lawful to scourge a freeman, without trial?" The chief captain said, "Tell me,

art thou a Roman?" He answered, "I am." The captain said, "With a great sum obtained I this freedom." His prisoner replied proudly, "But I was born free!" While this was true of his civil franchise, he would not for a moment have affirmed it of that freedom wherewith Christ had made him free. For this he was wholly indebted to Christ, who had sacrificed his own life to ransom him from the bondage of sin. All that Paul had ever done in these premises was simply to believe. And even for this he claimed no credit, saying, "By grace have ye been saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

The same condition is affixed to redemption in every case. We are redeemed from bondage as the Jews were delivered out of Egypt. Not one of them bought his way to freedom or escaped by his own effort. God "with a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm" set them free.

The blood of the Passover was the visible sign of their ransom; but the blood itself was ineffective save as it was sprinkled upon the lintels of their doors. Faith is the hyssop branch with which the blood is applied to the hearts of men.

The second item in the Inventory of Grace is Adoption—"the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Any man can say "God"; but no man can say "Father" who has not been received by the Spirit of adoption into the household of God.

This also is of grace, since we have neither done

nor can do anything to deserve it. The penitent thief had no time to make merit or to repair the damages of a life of sin. He had only an hour to live. Yet he went to Paradise as an adopted son of God. It is obvious that, in his case, there could be no personal desert; and, so far as adoption is concerned, the most righteous saint on earth has done no more than he to deserve it. We are all alike "chosen according to the good pleasure of his will."

And the choosing is "through Christ," who is the Elder Brother of us all. In the very article of death he reached out his pierced hand to the penitent thief, and so introduced him into God's family as an adopted son. He alone could do this, because he is God's "only begotten" or unadopted Son. In the Epistle to the Romans it is written that we are "foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." A great multitude whom no man can number pay tribute in heaven to the love of this Elder Brother, who has brought them into the Father's house.

And this adoption is on one condition; to wit, faith. The desire of Christ, in offering himself as a ransom, was that all sinners should enter into this high privilege; but not all are willing to have it so. There are multitudes who prefer to stand upon their own merit, as it is written, "He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them

gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name; who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The penitent thief was not translated to Paradise without a confession of his faith. It was briefly comprehended in one word, "LORD, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" But volumes could not have expressed more. It meant:

> Thee my new Master now I call,
> And consecrate to thee my all.

The third item in the Inventory of Grace is Sanctification—"He chose us in him before the foundation of the world; that we should be holy and without blemish before him."

No one is made perfect at conversion. Minerva is said to have leaped full-armed from the forehead of Jove; but no Christian is born that way. Character is a development under the influence of the Spirit of God. No one is a true Christian who is not growing better every day. He may not be conscious of it, may lament that he is "living at a poor dying rate"; but grow he must. He cannot stand still. Living is growing. Following Christ is moving on. The seagulls in the wake of a steamer which is making thirty knots an hour seem to poise on motionless wings; nevertheless, though noiselessly and imperceptibly, they are keeping pace with the ship. So does the humblest Christian advance in his spiritual life; and the fact that he mourns his imperfection and is ambitious

to "fly up the heavenly way," is proof presumptive of his growing toward God.

This, too, is of grace; wherefore sanctification is called "growth in grace." And every new attainment is reckoned among the gifts of the Spirit, who is himself fittingly called "the gift of God."

And whatever attainments we make in the higher life are through Christ; for the function of the Spirit is to take of the things of Jesus and show them unto us. The Master said, "He shall bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you." It is thus that he is ever kept before us as our Lord and Exemplar; so that the truths of his preaching become our Creed and its precepts become our Moral Code; and our growth in character is measured by our earnestness in striving to be like him.

And faith is the vital nexus by which we are bound to him. It is obvious then that everything depends on our believing. The faith on which our growth is conditioned must be a living faith; that is, a faith expressing itself in works. A moral life has its beginning in faith. It is recorded that when one came to Jesus asking, "What must we do that we might work the works of God?" that is, "How shall we do such works as will commend us to God?" he answered, "This is the work of God, that ye believe in Him whom he hath sent." No man can expect to be on friendly terms with the King while rejecting the King's son. No one who refuses to believe in the only-begotten Son of God

can reasonably hope to build up such a character or to perform such works as shall make him worthy of the complacent love of God.

The fourth item in the Inventory is Glorification. This means heaven; for in due time the riches of grace become the riches of glory. Here are the links of the living chain: "Whom God foreknew he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son; . . . and whom he foreordained, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

This glorification is also of grace. Heaven is referred to as our "purchased possession"; but the purchase price is never paid by us. The Land of Promise which was apportioned among the children of Israel was not held by them in fee simple. Every farm was a leasehold held for God. In like manner the better country for which we look is not for those who claim it by right of ownership or merit, but for such as are willing to hold it as an inheritance received through the unmerited favor of God.

And this again is through Christ. The countersign at heaven's gate is, "In His Name!" A stranger came to my study to see me recently, and, as it chanced to be my busy hour, I felt obliged to say no. On being informed, however, that he was a friend of my son I laid everything by and gave him a cordial welcome. He who would get into heaven must do it in like manner. The door is al-

ways open to those who can claim a cordial acquaintance with the King's Son.

But that claim must be substantiated by faith in him. In heaven there are "ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands" of saints triumphant; but there is not one among them who can not join in the song, "Worthy art thou; for thou wast slain and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests!"

Such is the Inventory of Grace. Its increment is all unearned, all of grace, through Christ by faith in him.

But responsibilities as well as privileges are involved in these possessions. A cab-driver, sitting drowsily aloft with his lines in hand, was aroused by a voice saying, "Are you thus and so?" The speaker was an attorney, who, on receiving an affirmative answer, added, "I have a letter stating that your uncle in England has left you twenty thousand pounds." The man seemed dazed for a moment; then realizing his good fortune he uncovered himself, saying simply, "Good-by, hat!" No more cab-driving for the heir of a fortune! If once we could realize what it means to be possessed of the riches of grace, we should be able to put a truer estimate on the beggarly things of the lower life. We should be moved to say, like Paul, "I count all things to be loss . . . that I may gain Christ and be found in him!" For if Christ be

ours, all things are ours. We are "children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" to "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away." This being so, what manner of persons ought we to be? God help us to value aright our present privileges and the purchased possession that awaits us!

Our treasure is laid up in bags that wax not old. We are richer than Crœsus! Our wealth is expressed in terms of eternal life. Fire cannot burn it; death cannot deprive us of it. Aye, richer than Crœsus, a thousandfold, is the man who is rich toward God!

8. *PRAYER*

> O Lord, give me a sincere ambition to make the most of myself and do my utmost for thee. And, having done my best, make me content with my lot. Give me enough of food convenient for me. Enrich me with the treasure which this world can neither give nor take away. Give me to know the riches of thy grace. Be thou my all in all; for Christ's sake. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "Father, whate'er of earthly bliss."

10. *BENEDICTION*

> Now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ,

that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

FIFTH SERVICE

The Double-Minded Man

1. *INVOCATION*

O THOU Eternal and Ever-blessed God! I confess my inability to approach thee aright. Give me a spirit of humble faith and reverent boldness as I draw near in the Name of Christ. Teach me my need and thy sufficiency; and permit me to enrich my soul with thee; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "Hark, ten thousand harps and voices."

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

1 Kings 18:17-21.
Luke 16:1-13.

4. *PRAYER*

O God, my Father, I thank thee for the revelation of thy love. I know thou art the adorable One, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in all thy glorious attributes. Angels and archangels worship thee with veiled faces, crying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" I am affrighted when, bearing the shameful burden of sin, I venture to lift my eyes toward thee. But, blessed be thy Name,

thou hast declared thy willingness in Christ to remove that burden. In his Name I approach thee; and, in the spirit of adoption, call thee Father. Thou lovest me. Oh, wonderful grace! What manner of love is this, that I should be called a child of God! And thou hast a blessed surprise in store for me farther on. Now are we sons of God; but it doth not yet appear what we shall be. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which thou hast prepared for those that love thee. And meanwhile thou leadest me through green pastures and by still waters toward the apocalypse of thy grace. I am assured that all things, here and now, are working together for my good, because I love thee. Are my pains and sorrows, my failures and disappointments, my long nights and weary days, all included in thy blessed plan for me? Then, Lord, if I must needs glory, I will glory in tribulation; for tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed. Help me ever to see the bright light in the cloud of thy Providence. Enable me to rest and be quiet. Teach me to pray with faith—not for myself only, but for all who are in trouble and calling upon thee. Enlarge my heart in self-forgetfulness, and make me more like Christ, who came not to be ministered

unto, but to minister. Make me of some use in this world; and to that end make me ready to go wherever I am sent to do thy holy will; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "Oh, could I speak the matchless worth!"

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

The Double-Minded Man

"If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like a surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." (James 1: 5-8.)

IT is quite certain that nobody would ever charge James with being a double-minded man. He had one mind, and it was usually made up. His colors were nailed to the mast: there was no question as to what he believed; and he was ever ready to give a reason for the faith that was in him.

He was pastor of the church in Jerusalem and, by reason of the importance of his parish, was probably regarded as the leading preacher of his time. He has left nothing but a brief epistle in five chapters, which is called "general" because it is ad-

dressed not to any particular church, but to Christians of all time. We gain from this epistle an inkling of his homiletic method; for it appears to be largely made up of sermon "briefs." There is one on The Tongue, another on Doing *versus* Talking, another on Faith without Works.

In our text we have the outline of a sermon on The Double-Minded Man. His name is given. As the Greek furnished the preacher with no suitable name, he was obliged to coin one; to wit, "Dipsychus," the man with two minds, and neither of them made up.

The sermon is in the nature of a character study. The artist paints, like an impressionist, in bold outlines, beginning a long way off. My purpose is simply to fill out the syllabus which he here gives us.

I. *"If any of you lacketh wisdom."*

Our mental equipment is made up of two things: Knowledge and Wisdom. By knowledge is meant all that we acquire through the five physical senses; by wisdom all that lies beyond the province of the physical senses and within the purview of faith, a sixth sense which is given us for the apprehension of spiritual things. Knowledge is important; but "wisdom is the principal thing." It has to do with the great problems that take hold of eternal life. One can get along without solving the secrets of nature; but to know about God and the Atonement, Immortality, Character and Usefulness—this is of vital moment. Wherefore, get wisdom; and with

all thy getting get understanding as to the great questions that center in God.

But who is this that "lacketh wisdom"? You and I; everybody. There are three kinds of people in the world. First, those who lack wisdom and are not aware of it. These are the sciolists, who can not be taught anything, because they imagine they know it all. Secondly, those who lack wisdom and don't care. These are the agnostics, which is the Greek equivalent of the Latin ignoramuses. The great problems of life and immortality are nothing to them; they have glanced at them, seen the difficulty of solution, and given them up. Thirdly, those who lack wisdom and would give anything in the world for it. They know how much depends upon it. Are they doubters? Yes. Every thinker is a doubter. There is no harm in that; the harm is in keeping on doubting and never getting over it. The honest doubter is in agony until he has solved the questions that perplex him. He can not sleep until he has found out. The man, on the contrary, who nurses his doubts and makes a display of them is not a doubter at all, but an unbeliever. He plays with great problems and fancies he is thinking them out. He denies truth while insisting that he is trying to discover it. But suppose a man is really an honest doubter and eager to get wisdom, what shall he do?

II. *"If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him—"* What? Think? By all means. And here again

there are three kinds of people. First, those who think they are thinking when they are doing nothing of the kind. They do not grapple with a question, but skim along the surface of it. A butterfly makes its way from one flower to another in the same way, hovering over each for an instant and then speeding on; but here comes a busy bee, who goes down into an apple blossom and stays there till, when he comes forth, his thighs are laden with sweetness. He has something to show for it. Secondly, those who do not take the trouble to think at all. Thinking means brain-sweat. It is easier to farm out their thinking than to do it themselves. The minister, the book-writer, and the newspaper man stand ready to frame opinions for them. The result is that their confession of faith is merely an echo, not a voice from the depths of their own souls. They are "taken up in the lips of talkers" and on they go—

> Crooked or straight, through quags or thorny dells,
> True to the jingling of their leader's bells.

Thirdly, those who really think—think down into the depths of a problem, and keep on thinking until they have thought to the end of it. With what result? Do they arrive at wisdom? Oh, no! The problems of the spiritual realm can not be solved by the unaided mind of man. A question in natural science may be satisfactorily answered on the evidence of the physical senses; but when a man gets beyond the circumscription of his finger-tips and wrestles with the questions of the unseen world he

must have help. His thinking is not in vain; since it leads him to a deeper conviction of his lack of wisdom and a profound sense of his need of divine help to supply it. Therefore—

III. *"If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God."*

But why of God? Why not ask of those who call themselves philosophic experts? Because, while they are subject to the same limitations that hamper us, God, who lives in the realm of the spiritual, knows all about it. Yes, God knows, if only he can be induced to tell. He knows all about himself, about immortality and about the redemptive work which he has wrought in our behalf through his only-begotten Son. He knows everything!

Eternity with all its years
Stands present to thy view;
To thee there's nothing old appears,
Great God, there's nothing new!

He not only knows, but, if he can be induced to speak, he will speak with authority. In the divine terminology there are no ifs or peradventures; only Yea and Amen.

It is at this very point, however, that an objection is interposed by those who want a religion with authority left out. How preposterous that is! A government without authority is a government without statutes or ordinances. Navigation without authority is sailing without chart or compass.

Trade without authority is buying and selling without a poundweight or a yardstick. It is like fishing without a line, bob or sinker, voting without a ballot, eating without food, and living without breath. A religion without authority is simply no religion.

But will God speak? If the man who lacks wisdom makes a humble prayer, is there reason to suppose that God will answer it?

IV. *"Let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."* There is a definite promise, one of a thousand, and the petitioner may depend upon it.

But how will God answer? Will he pour wisdom into the heart of a man, or by a direct revelation instruct him? Not at all. He will refer him to his Word. The Scriptures were given to this very end; and we are divinely enjoined to search them, because in them we rightly "think we have eternal life." The solution of spiritual problems given in the Scriptures is upon the authority of a "Thus saith the Lord"; for the Book was "written by holy men as they were moved by the Spirit of God."

"Aye; but," they say, "this begs the whole question. You ask us to go to God, when as yet we are not sure there is a God, and to accept the statements of the Bible while we are still in doubt as to whether it is really the Word of God."

Very well: the pastor of the Jerusalem Church had evidently anticipated an objection of this sort; for he continues:

V. *"But let him ask in faith."*

This means that there is something for a man to believe, at the very outset of his quest. The first thing to believe is that there is a God. For "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that seek after him." If a man is an atheist his search for wisdom is a hopeless one; for he who hath said in his heart "There is no God" is pronounced to be a fool; and "Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him."

But how about the Scriptures? It is here that the Lord shows himself "the rewarder of them that diligently seek him"; for the Bible is his overture to all truth-seekers. If there is a God anywhere in the universe and we are his offspring, is it likely that he would leave us without guidance, like shipwrecked sailors on a boundless sea? The suggestion is not only contrary to instinct, but to reason as well.

Here is a Book that claims to be the authoritative Word of God. What shall we do with it? The least that can be expected is that we shall approach it as we would any other book; that is, without prejudice. How does a man read Dana's Geology or a volume of Macaulay's History? Does he begin by assuming that it can not be relied upon? On the contrary, he assumes its truth until he has found something within to discredit it. The trouble is that in these controversial days, when men imbibe their views of inspiration from

its enemies, they read the Bible with a preliminary conviction that they can not believe it. What can God reveal to a man with such a hoodwink over his eyes? I do not believe that anybody ever read his Bible with a mind free from prejudice and open to conviction who did not conclude his search for wisdom by saying, "This is the veritable Word of God."

VI. *But, adds James, the prayer for wisdom must be made "without doubting."* Why so? Because *"he that doubteth is like a surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed."*

A wave does not travel; it gets nowhere. The winds move, the waters move; but the wave simply marks time. It is a local disturbance, nothing more. So is he that doubteth. He wonders, vacillates and decides nothing either way. *"Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."* And the fault is not the Lord's, but his. He is not in a receptive mood, wherefore the Lord has nothing for him. He is a coquette between two charmers, Truth and Error, with neither yes nor no for either of them.

VII. *This is Dipsychus, "the double-minded man"; and he is "unstable in all his ways."*

The ways of a man are briefly comprehended in his creed and his conduct. Dipsychus has no creed; and, not having any creed of his own, he is fond of insisting that nobody else shall have one. He is a free-thinker. Ask him what he believes about God, or the divinity of Christ, or the Atonement, or the

Inspiration of the Scriptures, or the Life Beyond, and he will tell you that he has not decided about these matters, and will be likely to add that in his opinion these are riddles which can not be found out.

The result is that, having no creed, he has no code of morals; for a man's moral principles are built upon his convictions of truth. The free-thinker is therefore a free-liver; and if his life is not so lawless as his manner of thought, it is simply because a sense of expediency and common decency controls him. The logical sequence of Think-as-you-please is Go-as-you-please.

So Dipsychus is *"unstable in all his ways."* He is like Reuben, of whom Jacob said, "Boiling over as water, thou shalt not have the pre-eminence." To have pre-eminence is to reach the highest levels of life; and the double-minded man is incapable of doing it.

What, then, is the conclusion of the matter? It is found in the words which Elijah addressed to the multitudes on the day of the Lord's Controversy: "How long go ye limping between the two sides?" The figure is of one crossing from side to side and resting nowhere. "How long go ye limping between the two sides? If Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him!" Choose, one way or the other. Be a Christian if you can, or an infidel if you must; in any case do not continue to be forever divided betwixt the two.

The great problems are before you. Face them,

my friend, and look them in the eyes. What do you think of God? What do you think of the Bible? What do you think of Christ? What do you think of the Passion of the Cross? What do you think of heaven and hell? You don't know? You haven't made up your mind? Yet these are the problems of life! I pray you do not sleep to-night until you have grappled with them. Think something to the end. Arrive somewhere. Be able to give a reason for the faith or for the unfaith that is in you. Get a foothold, a place to stand on. Be in a position to say of something, "This I know!" Find some place on *terra firma* as a standpoint for the solution of problems farther on; and, having found a standpoint, hold it! Let no passing wind of controversy swerve you. Put your feet in your coign of vantage and quit yourself there like a man with a mind of his own. And be ready on occasion to speak up like Luther, "Here I stand! I can not otherwise: God help me!"

8. *PRAYER*

> Good Lord, deliver me from a double mind. Show me the solid ground of truth and righteousness, and help me to plant my feet upon it. Give me the grace of steadfastness that I may hold out. Make me faithful even unto death; and then, for Jesus' sake, give me an abundant entrance into life. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "Jesus, Saviour, pilot me!"

10. *BENEDICTION*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you. Amen.

SIXTH SERVICE

Behold, What Manner of Love!

1. *INVOCATION*

O God, my refuge and strength, incline my heart to seek thy presence in Jesus' Name. Thou hast said, "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, I will hear them and not forsake them." My fainting soul crieth out unto thee, as in a dry and thirsty land. Oh, give me to drink of the living waters of thy Grace. Be near to bless me; for in thy presence is fullness of joy. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove!"

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Psalm 103.
Luke 15:11-32.

4. *PRAYER*

Father in Heaven, what more couldst thou have done for me that thou hast not done? Thy loving-kindnesses are as the sands of the seashore for multitude. Thou hast breathed into my nostrils the breath of life, fed me and

clothed me, lulled me to sleep at night, and waked me every morning to a new day of privilege and opportunity. I have sinned against thy holy law; but thou hast not dealt with me after my sins, nor rewarded me according to mine iniquities. Thou hast so loved me as to give thine only-begotten and well-beloved Son to pay my ransom from the shame, the penalty, and the power of sin; and thou hast promised all the benefits of his vicarious death on the sole and simple condition that I believe in him. What manner of love is this? What shall I render unto thee for all thy tender mercies? I will take the cup of thy salvation and pay unto thee my solemn vows. I can do no more. Help me to do no less. I have vowed to follow Christ as my Prophet, Priest and King. Help me to keep that solemn vow. I would take my full salvation and follow closely in his steps. He went about doing good; help me to go about in the same way. He came into the world to seek and to save the lost; and he said, "As the Father hath sent me, so send I you"; wherefore I would make it my first business to seek and to save. I have friends who know thee not; help me to bring them to thee. Make me a minister of thy grace. Show me how to preach the evangel in my walk and conversation. Bless all who profess thy Name and make them faithful. Deepen their convic-

tions of truth and righteousness. Make them ever loyal to thee. Make them deaf to the clamor of unbelief and blind to the allurements of sin. Serve thyself with them and with me also as long as life endures. And when the time comes for promotion, see to it, dear Lord, that I am fully prepared to meet the larger tasks of the life beyond. This I ask in the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "Jesus, lover of my soul."

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

"Behold, what Manner of Love!"

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew not him. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is. And every one that hath this hope *set* on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3: 1-3.)

THE keynote here is struck in the word "Behold!" It is like an index-finger pointing to something worth seeing. It is as if the writer cried, "Attention! I show you a wonderful thing!"

What is the wonderful thing to which our minds are thus directed? Is it the love of God? Not at

all. To say that God is love is to say what everybody knows. It is written across the skies. The birds sing it, the brooks murmur it. The commonest gifts of Providence bear witness to it. Every pulsation of life manifests it.

But the reference here is to a significant phase of the Divine love. "Behold, *what manner* of love!" And, reading on, we perceive that our attention is called to that gracious "manner" or manifestation of love by which we, undeserving sinners that we are, are restored to our original and normal place in the family of God.

A picture of this "manner of love" was drawn in vivid colors by our Lord in the Parable of the Prodigal Son.* A young man is sitting at table in his father's house. He is pale, haggard, scarred with the signs of a misspent life. What right has he here? He had been happy in his boyhood under the old roof-tree; but the *Wanderlust* seized him. He said to his father, "Give me the portion of thy substance that falleth to me"; and thereupon he took his journey into a far country, where he wasted his substance in riotous living. Then came the famine, the famine that inevitably comes in every wayward life; and he began to be in want. Out in the swine-field, friendless and famishing, he came to himself and said, "I will arise and go to my father." And, strange to say, his father received him. Behold, what manner of love! His

*It may be remarked, in passing, that the best exposition of the Parable of the Prodigal Son is found in the passage before us.

father saw him when he was yet a great way off, and ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him. So here sits the profligate, clothed in the best robe and wearing the signet ring, with sounds of music and merry-making all about him. What right has he here? That is the point. By all the standards of human judgment he should be reaping the harvest of his vices; but the father welcomed him with open arms, saying, "It is meet to make merry and be glad." In this complete restoration of the prodigal to all filial privilege we have an illustration and clear interpretation of the adopting love of God.

The whole episode is so strange, so contrary to our usual canons of fair-dealing, that it may be well to inquire a little further into this "manner of love" and the singular features that characterize it.

I. *Let it be noted, at the outset, that it is an unchanging and imperishable love.*

There was never a moment when the father of the prodigal did not yearn with tender affection over his wayward son. He must have known of the wretched life in the far country; but that did not cool the ardor of his paternal affection. It is safe to say that, over and over again, he looked beyond the hills and sighed, "Oh, that my boy would come home!" Most wonderful is such love; many waters can not quench it.

So is God's love toward all sinners. No man can wander away so far as to loose the hold of the Father's heart. He may be a thief, a drunkard or

a murderer, still God loves him. A woman may defile the purity of her womanhood so that more respectable sinners look askance at her; but God still loves her. His love is the most persistent, indestructible thing in the universe. You may keep on sinning, die impenitent, and go into the outer darkness; but even there God's love will follow you. I do not say that it will save you; for in the Covenant of Salvation there is, in legal phraseology, a "party of the second part," without whose consent all overtures of mercy are ineffectual: but I do say that there never yet was a man created in God's likeness who sinned so far or so utterly expatriated himself that the Infinite Love does not ever and forever follow him.

II. *And then this singular "manner of love" is wholly gratuitous;* that is, unmerited on the sinner's part. It is "without money and without price."

The prodigal was quite right when he said to his father, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." He had gone away of his own accord, had taken his patrimony with him and squandered it, had forfeited every natural or reasonable claim to his father's consideration; yet, on his return, he was welcomed to the old home and restored to all the privileges that he had voluntarily and recklessly given up.

The same is true of every penitent sinner who comes home to God. He knows he is not worthy

to gather up the crumbs that fall from the table; yet all the food and fruits of grace are richly spread before him by the Father.

While all our hearts and all our songs
Join to admire the feast,
Each of us cries with thankful tongue,
Lord, why was I a guest?

A sense of ill-deserving is the very heart of penitence; and, as such, it is one of the vital evidences of faith. As in heaven all worthiness is ascribed "to Him that sitteth upon the throne," so here the true follower of Christ is frank to confess that, of himself, he deserves none of the blessings lavished upon him.

Why was I made to hear thy voice
And enter while there's room,
While thousands make a wretched choice
And rather starve than come?

The point so often urged by non-Christians, that "there are better people outside of the Church than in it," is well taken; since in the fellowship of Christ there is none self-righteous,—no, not one,—but all are confessedly sinners, sinners without merit, only sinners saved by grace.

'Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly drew us in;
Else had we still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin.

III. *But, notwithstanding this ill-deserving on our part, the adopting love of God is a just and equitable love.*

There is one figure in the drama of salvation which does not appear in the Parable of the Prodigal Son; that is, the figure of the only-begotten Son of God. It is his appearance that must furnish the missing link of justice in this transaction; for it is only through his interposition that the prodigal can rightly and properly be restored to the privileges of his Father's house. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." This only-begotten Son goes out into the far country to make expiation for sin, and, having paid his ransom, he takes the sinner's hand and leads him home—providing, always, that the sinner is willing to go. At the doorway of the Father's house he pleads, "For my sake receive him." It is only so that God can be "just and yet the justifier of the ungodly." It is only so that the forefeited birthright can be restored to the wayward son. And when all the parties in the transaction are willing—to wit, the Father, the Saviour and the sinner—where in the universe is there one competent to criticise the justice of it?

IV. *Again, this singular love of the Father is an open and avowed love.* "Now are we *called* the children of God."

Who calls us so? As for ourselves, we hesitate. As for the world, typified by the envious and angry brother of the prodigal looking in at the window upon the festivities at the father's house, it refuses

so to characterize us. It is the Father who calls us children. Behold, what manner of love is here! And the soul of the penitent responds, Yea and Amen; for "we have received the Spirit of Adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father!" The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Here is the secret of assurance. There is no assurance but the assurance of faith—the faith that lays hold on Christ as "the first-born among many brethren," by whom we are brought back and restored to the birthright which we had forfeited through sin. Thus, as Wesley sings

> The Spirit answers to the blood,
> And tells me I am born of God.

V. *Furthermore, this is an immeasurable love.* It begins here and reaches out into eternity. "Now are we children of God." Heaven begins at conversion. "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life." Had the elder brother been asked what treatment might properly be accorded to the prodigal, he would probably have said, "Let him be taken back on probation for awhile; let him toil in the fields and eat with the servants. Having wasted his patrimony, he should be treated accordingly; give him his just due." Not so, however, does God deal with his penitent children when they return to him. "Now are we children of God"; and "if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." The best robe is ours; the signet ring is ours; the record of our sins

is blotted out, so that they are remembered no more against us. All this here and now.

But beyond—oh, there is something vast, unveiled as yet and wonderful to dream of. "Now are we children of God; but it is not yet made manifest what we shall be." There are illimitable vistas of life and character and usefulness before us. So runs the hymn of the early Church:

"Things which eye saw not and ear heard not,
And which entered not into the heart of man,
Whatsover things God prepared for them that love him."

VI. *It must be added, however, that this particular phase of the Divine love is provisional.* A condition is affixed to it; namely, that the sinner must accept it.

Therein is a full statement of the great doctrine of Justification by Faith; for "saving faith" is simply an acceptance of the grace of God. The prodigal might have remained in the far country all his life, despite his shame and remorse, had he not said, "I will arise and go." As he had of his own accord abandoned the old home and squandered his inheritance, so must he return of his own accord or he will never see his home again.

The love of God is immeasurable; but, were it so a thousand times, it could not save the sinner against his will. The hand that was pierced for our deliverance is extended in vain unless we grasp it. "I will arise and go!" is the Open Sesame of all the treasures in the Father's house.

And when the sinner resolves to return, it is ob-

vious that he must return by the way marked out for him. "I am the way," said Jesus: "no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Absolutely there is no other way. Again, "I am the door." Aye, the door is open; but, so far as the salvation of the sinner is concerned, it might as well have remained shut, unless, of his own volition, he passes through it.

VII. *One thing more about this wonderful love: It is self-evidencing;* that is, it produces certain necessary and obvious results. "Every one that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

Had the prodigal on his return appeared at the doorway of his father's house with a harlot by his side, one with whom he had consorted in the far country, do you suppose the hospitality of the home would have been extended him? Sin is the harlot of the world. He who comes home from the far country must abjure it. Not a word is said of the subsequent life of the prodigal; but it goes without saying that his former habits were given up. No more wasting of his substance in riotous living; no more habitual indulgence in sin. This is what is expected of those who enjoy and appreciate the high privileges involved in a true filial relation with God. Character is the visible test of a Christian profession. "By their fruits ye shall know them." We are saved by faith in Christ; but "faith without works is dead." In faith alone there is no life, no truth—no reality.

We have been contemplating a singular manifestation of the love of God. Oh, the length and breadth and depth and height of that love! To think that we who were alienated by sin, our birthright squandered, and without the shadow of a claim on the consideration of our Father, should be called his sons! Behold what manner of love he hath bestowed upon us!

It is related that a native helper in India, when engaged in assisting the missionary in translating the Scriptures into his native tongue, paused at this passage and said brokenly, "I can not write it. O master, let me rather write, 'What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be permitted to kiss his feet!'" But the Father will not have it so. By faith in Christ we are restored to every privilege of sonship,—the ring, the best robe, and the inheritance,—and by the Spirit of Adoption we are taught to say, "Abba, Father!"

Behold, what manner of love is this! What shall we render unto the Lord for his loving-kindness? All that we can do is to take of the cup of his salvation and pay unto him our solemn vows.

> It passeth knowledge, that dear love of thine,
> My Jesus, Saviour; yet this heart of mine
> Would sing a love so rich, so full, so free,
> Which brought an undone sinner such as me
> Right home to God.

In the hour of temptation, in the stress of sorrow, in the face of strenuous duty, let us contemplate this love that passeth knowledge. Living and dy-

ing, let us behold it, until the day break and the shadows flee away, and we awake in the likeness of our Lord and Saviour; for we shall be like him then—when we see him as he is.

8. *PRAYER*

O God, give me a clear vision of thy wonderful love. Let it break down all the stubborn barriers of my unbelief and bring me sobbing with penitence to thy feet. I want all the rich blessings of adoption in the household of faith. I want the ring and the robe and a place at thy table. I want to serve thee henceforth; not from a sense of duty, but for Jesus' sake, and because I love thee. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "Awake, my soul, to joyful lays!"

10. *BENEDICTION*

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SEVENTH SERVICE

The Tabernacles of Tabor

1. *INVOCATION*

O THOU, who dwellest in the high and holy place, bow thine ear unto my supplication. Search me, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any evil way in me. Purge me with hyssop, that I may be clean; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve!"

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Isaiah 63:1-9.
Luke 9:18-36.

4. *PRAYER*

O thou Eternal and Ever-blessed God, help me to praise thee and magnify thy Name and give thanks to thee for thy great goodness. Thou hast watched over me in the defenseless hours of sleep, and dost graciously offer thy Hand to guide me through the duties of another day. Manifold are the gifts of thy Providence; but who shall measure thine unspeakable Gift? Blessed be thy Name for

the salvation that has been accomplished through the sacrifice of thy beloved Son. I thank thee that whosoever will may come unto thee through him. Father, I come. I come for salvation. I come for service. I come to pour out my soul in praise and prayer before thee. Give me not only the pardon of sin, but sanctifying grace, for Jesus' sake. Teach me to be poor in spirit, mourning for sin, hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Make me patient in suffering and faithful in thy service. Let the mind that was in Christ Jesus be also in me. Give me some measure of his self-forgetfulness. Forbid that I should constantly brood on my own sorrows, unmindful of those whose pains are more intense, whose burdens are heavier, whose loneliness is more forlorn, than mine. I thank thee that, whatever I may lack, I am rich in Christ. He is made unto me wisdom and righteousness and sanctification. In him I am complete, and he is mine forever. Not life nor death, things present nor things to come, shall separate me from thy love which is in Christ Jesus my Lord. For this, help me to sing Hallelujah. But forbid that this should content me. Help me to distribute among others the bread which thou hast broken for me. Lord, pity those who have no Christ; no Saviour from sin, no helper in trouble, no light on the eternal path. Oh,

would that I might to-day lead some sinner to thee. Help me to live so that my word and my example may have saving grace. Give me souls for my hire, stars in my heavenly crown. I would not go to heaven alone. I want to be able to say, "Here, Lord, am I and they whom thou hast given me." For I am thine, not only to be saved, but to be used in saving others. Serve thyself with me, Lord; and grant me not a salvation "so as by fire" but an abundant entrance into thine Eternal Kingdom, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds!"

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

The Tabernacles of Tabor

"And Peter said, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, I will make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' While he was yet speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold! a voice out of the cloud, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.'" (Matt. 17: 4, 5.)

WHAT a Triumvirate! Jesus, the God-man; Moses, the Lawgiver (dead now fifteen hundred years); and Elijah, the Prophet of the Chariot of fire.

And what a Conference! Never was Council

of State like this. For these heavenly visitants "spake with Jesus of the decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem." Nearby stood another triumvirate: John, the beloved; James, who was destined to be the proto-martyr; and Peter, "the Stone-man."

No wonder they were dazed and bewildered; for, as they looked, the Lord was transfigured before them, so that his garments were white and glistening and his face did shine as the sun. Two of them were silent; but Peter, ever impulsive and outspoken, said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here! If thou wilt, I will make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

All the world loves Peter, a diamond in the rough, bold, headstrong—"a plain, blunt man," wearing his heart upon his sleeve. He was a great blunderer, no doubt, much given to leaping before he looked and firing before he had taken aim. If ever there was a sound of slipping or stumbling in their ranks, the disciples said with one accord, "That's Peter!" It is recorded that in the present instance he spoke impulsively, "not knowing what he said." It does not follow, however, that his words were ill-advised.

So far as his longing to abide in the Mount of Vision is concerned, that was most natural. Are there not hours in the trysting-place and the sanctuary which seem to us like foretastes of heaven, moving us to sing—

My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss?

And though the call of duty makes this impossible, though the demoniac at the foot of the mountain cries out for healing, though the white fields demand the sickle, who shall blame us for loving the golden hour and desiring to prolong it?

And with respect to the suggestion of the three tabernacles, though it is recorded that Peter "wist not what he said," it is quite presumable that on reflection he might still have said it.

He wanted one tabernacle for Moses. Why not? Moses stood for the Law.

And "the Law is good." Who finds fault with the Decalogue? It has never been abrogated and never can be. It did not originate with Moses; but was interwoven in the beginning with the very nerve and fiber of the human constitution. If there ever was a time when the sanctity of law needed to be emphasized, it is just now. In an age when loose thinking has brought forth a bountiful harvest of loose living, it is immensely important that men should be reminded of the ethical imperative; to wit, that there is no escaping "Thou shalt!" and "Thou shalt not!"

But the Law can not save. Why not? Because nobody keeps it. To the young ruler who came running to Jesus with the question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" he answered, "Thou

knowest the commandments," adding, "This do and thou shalt live." Why then did the countenance of the young ruler fall, and why did he cry, "What lack I yet?" Because, thinking that he had not transgressed, he was at his wit's end. The Law is good; but, in the nature of the case, it can offer no immunity to those who violate it.

Of what advantage, then, is the Law? Much, every way. It is written, "By the Law is the knowledge of sin." A man goes to his looking-glass, not to wash his face, but to discover that there is occasion for washing it. No one who thoughtfully ponders the Decalogue can fail to arrive at this conclusion, "I have left undone the things which I ought to have done and have done the things which I ought not." What then? "By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified." The moralist who builds this tabernacle and dwells therein is making a fatal blunder. If there is anywhere a fountain opened for uncleanness, it behooves him as a reasonable man to find it.

A second tabernacle was proposed for Elijah. And again, why not? Elijah stood for Doctrine. He was one of the faculty of Prophets who were divinely ordained and equipped to instruct the people in the great verities of the spiritual life.

And doctrine, like ethics, is good. To a thoughtful man the popular outcry against creeds is incomprehensible. *Credo* means "I believe." A man who has no convictions of truth is simply an invertebrate. The butcher, the baker, and the candlestick

maker would be without friends or patronage did they not hold to certain commercial dogmas that commend them to the confidence of their fellowmen. Is it not obviously demanded of us, created in the divine image and moving on to a divine heritage, that we should rest our character in the great fundamentals that have their source and center in God? Alas for one who, amid the conflicting winds of controversy, can not plant his feet somewhere on *terra firma* and say, "This I know."

But there is no salvation in a creed. An intellectual acceptance of the fundamental truths of the Christian religion, however important it may be otherwise, has no power to absolve a sinful soul or commend it to God.

If a man be starving, he will count himself most fortunate to come into possession of a bank note; but whether that bank note will relieve his hunger depends on three things: First, it must be backed by capital; secondly, it must be convertible into bread; and, thirdly, the bread must be eaten; otherwise the hungry man will die in spite of it. In like manner a creed must have Divine authority behind it, must be convertible into the terms of practical life, and must express itself in character and usefulness.

It is important that we should believe in the doctine of the Atonement; but an intellectual apprehension of that doctrine will avail us nothing unless we vitally appropriate Christ and follow him. This is the meaning of that profound saying of his,

"Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man ye have no life in you." He must be taken, as the loaf is eaten, so that his very being shall be assimilated with ours. In other words, the only creed that can effect our salvation is not a creed on parchment, but one that goes about on two feet and makes its profession not only with two eloquent lips but with two beneficent hands.

It was to an orthodox professor that the Apostle James wrote, "Thou believest that there is one God. Thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead"? If a mere subscription to doctrinal symbols could open the gate of Heaven, there would be no souls in outer darkness; for in that region of hopelessness there is not one who does not perceive, through the irresistible logic of his environment, that there is one God who has made provision for universal salvation through the sacrifice of his only-begotten Son. But how can that avail for those who have rejected Christ and whose hearts are still at enmity with God?

A third tabernacle proposed by Peter was for the worship of Christ. And again why not? The Church, as the seat of worship, rests on divine authority; being founded on the impregnable rock of the Saviourship of Christ so firmly that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

And the Church is good. It affords a place for a Christian to show his colors and, better still, gives him a vantage-ground to work for God.

It is not claimed that the Church is perfect—claimed only that the Church is the great organism through which God is working, by the power of his Spirit and through the co-operation of his people, for the setting up of a kingdom of truth and righteousness in this world of ours.

It is easy to find fault; yet the fact remains that there is more strength for humanity and progress in the little finger of the Church than in the loins of those who oppose it. The very fact that its members are so freely criticised for not living up to their profession is proof positive that the fault-finders themselves have a high estimate of the Church. And the wiser course for those who are thus disposed to criticise would be to come into our fellowship and show us how to do it.

But the Church can not save. The rites and ceremonies of worship give no title to eternal life. How was it in Israel? "To what purpose, saith the Lord, is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts. Bring no more vain oblations. Your incense is an abomination unto me. Your appointed feasts my soul hateth; I am weary to bear them. When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you. Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood! Wash you; make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do well."

A man may cry, "Church! Church!"
With no more piety than other people:
A daw's not counted a religious bird
Because it keeps a-cawing from a steeple.

In other words, the most elaborate forms of worship, like the most rigid subscriptions of orthodoxy, are of themselves impotent to save.

If Church-members were consistent, that would answer the requirements of the case; but, unfortunately, there is no such thing as "consistency." Where is there a church-member who brings the bottom of his life up to the top of his life?

So, while it is important to be a member of the Church, the one thing that is vitally necessary is to be a member of Christ; as he said, "except ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye have no life within you." A name on an ecclesiastical roster is of no value except that it stands for a corresponding name in the Lamb's book of life.

In all the teaching of Jesus there is nothing more significant than this: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name cast out devils and in thy name done many wonderful works; and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you."

Well, if Law can not save, and if doctrine can not save, and if Church-membership can not save, what can? Jesus only. The vision of the three

tabernacles vanishes into thin air. "And when they lifted up their eyes the disciples saw none save Jesus only." So far as salvation is concerned, he is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

We need three helpers on our way to heaven's gate; and Jesus wears the triple crown.

First, *He is our Priest.* The Law stands as the ideal of righteousness in the mind of God; but when the Law is broken there is no alternative for the sinner but retribution, unless expiation shall be made in some way. And Christ, in his priestly office, has made such expiation by bearing our sins in his own body on the bitter tree. So it is written, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the ordinance of the Law might be fulfilled in us."

Secondly, *we need a Prophet* to instruct us in truth. And Christ wears the prophetic crown. He said not only "I am come to bear witness of truth," but "I am the truth." Here is the touchstone for determining upon all creeds and upon all doctrinal symbols. Let them be accorded their full value as representing the earnest quests and controversies of the ages; yet must they all alike be estimated by their conformity to the teaching of Christ. So that, when we have learned our utmost at all other oracles, we must still count it our supreme privilege to sit as disciples at Jesus' feet and learn of him. His

school is our Court of Final Appeal. The last word is spoken in any argument when he has said "This is false" or "This is true." If he affirm the personality of God, his own deity and the validity of his Atonement, the trustworthiness of Scripture, the Resurrection and the life eternal, this for his disciples is an end of controversy. We can do no otherwise than believe what he tells us.

Thirdly, *we need a King,* to protect, control, and conduct us in the pathway of life. And Christ is "King in Zion." His commands are ultimate for those who sincerely profess to believe in him. He is sole and supreme Lord of the Mind and Lord of the Conscience for those who love him:

> I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,
> Over mountain, and plain, and sea;
> I'll do what you want me to do, dear Lord,
> I'll be what you want me to be.

It has been said that Peter made no mistake when he proposed the three tabernacles; but, whether it was a mistake or not, we know that, as to the main issue, his heart was in the right place. He believed in Christ as his Prophet, Priest and King.

It was he who, in answer to his Lord's question, "Who do ye say that I am?" made answer, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" For this he was called the "Stone-man." On that good confession as on a mighty rock he built his faith so firmly that, after bravely living for it, he crowned his life by dying for it.

We can make no mistake by following his example thus far. He who builds his life and character on Christ is safe forever. The rains may descend, the floods come, the winds blow and beat upon his house; but it can not fall, because it is founded upon a rock. Wherefore, in our walk and conversation, in our worship and orthodoxy, in our influence in time and our hope for eternity, let us make Christ first, last, midst and all in all.

8. *PRAYER*

O God, give me an undivided heart; a heart so full of devotion to Christ that every thought and impulse shall bow down in subjection to him. Help me to follow in his steps until, going on from grace to grace and from glory to glory, I shall at length behold his face, be changed into his likeness, and abide with him forever. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "When I survey the Wondrous Cross."

10. *BENEDICTION*

Peace be unto you, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

EIGHTH SERVICE

The Wells of the Desert

1. *INVOCATION*

O LORD, thy mercies are new every morning and fresh every evening; wherefore let the outgoings of the morning and of the evening praise thee. Fill my heart with gratitude for countless loving-kindnesses, as I approach thee; and let my worship come up before thee as sweet incense; for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "To-day the Saviour calls."

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Isaiah 12.
John 4:1-26.

4. *PRAYER*

O God, I address thee with fear and trembling, because thou reignest in light and glory unapproachable; but when I remember thy love as revealed in thy dearly beloved Son, I draw nigh with confidence and boldness. His Name is my all-prevailing plea. He ever liveth to make intercession as my Advocate at the Throne of Heavenly Grace. I thank

thee for the atonement which he wrought for me. Blessed be thy Name for the Cross and the River of Comfort that flows from it. I thank thee for my assurance that on his account my sins, which have been many, are all blotted out, so that there is no more condemnation. My life is hid with Christ in thee. I thank thee also for the influence of the sanctifying Spirit by which I am enabled to grow toward his likeness day by day. I thank thee for the Bible and the Sabbath and the fellowship of saints. Thou hast many people in the world, worshiping in many lands and many languages, and calling themselves by many denominational names. Bless them all, O Lord. Bless those who gather in temples where imposing choirs and orchestras, the concord of many voices, make a joyful sound before thee. Bless those who assemble in the little Churches by the crossroads on the frontier, a feeble folk like the conies, but lifting up holy hands with their hearts unto thee in the heavens. Bless the lone sufferers who in thousands of sick-rooms, racked with pain and overborne with weariness, look to thee for help and comfort and the peace that passeth all understanding. And, O Lord, in great mercy remember those who live in the light of the Gospel, and are yet without hope because they have not accepted thine overtures of grace. Incline their ears to hear, and draw them that they may

run after thee. Say to them, "Come, now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow, and though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." Be with me in this hour of worship and help me to carry its lessons into my life. If thou hast any errand for me, help me to do it joyously. Where thou biddest me to go, I will go, dear Lord; over mountain and plain and sea; I'll do what you want me to do, dear Lord; I'll be what you want me to be. Try me to-day in the field of duty. Use me as long as I live; wear me out in thy service, every atom of energy that I have; wear me all out in serving thee; then graciously say "Well done!" and give me larger tasks to do. And the praise of my salvation shall be thine forever, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "Did Christ o'er sinners weep?"

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

The Wells of the Desert

"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." (Isaiah 12: 3.)

THE mischievous critics have played havoc with this twelfth chapter of Isaiah. To begin with, they say it is wholly out of place. It is indeed like a *Lobgesang* in the midst of a *miserere.* The Prophet has been recording a series of doleful vi-

sions. He has mourned over the nation as a patient afflicted unto death: "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness, but wounds, and bruises, and fresh stripes." He has seen the altars of Baal smoking on the hilltops and the people kissing their hands to the golden horses of the sun; while the hypocritical priests of Jehovah were offering vain oblations in the Temple with unclean hands, and incense which gave "a stinking savor in the nostrils of God." He has pointed with alarm at the armies of Assyria, whose banners were waving in the distance like the wings of a foul bird hastening to the prey. On every hand there was nothing in sight but trouble and darkness, dimness and anguish. Then suddenly this song: "Cry aloud and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion; for great in the midst of thee is the Holy One of Israel!" It is as if a procession on its way to the graveyard were all at once to cease weeping and break into Hallelujahs.

And this is one reason why these mischievous critics insist that Isaiah did not write it. The hand of a hypothetical "redactor," they say, has interjected the song at this inappropriate place. But why could not Isaiah have written it? "Because the internal evidence is against it." What do they mean by that? "It does not sound like him: its style is so different." But if that proves anything it proves too much; it is like saying that a singer can not sing in two keys. Nevertheless, for this reason they have invented a writer called "Deutero-

Isaiah," whom they hold responsible for everything in Isaiah that "does not sound like him."

It might be affirmed on similar grounds that the author of the majestic measures of "Paradise Lost" could not have written L'Allegro:

> Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
> Jest and youthful Jollity,
> Sport that wrinkled care derides,
> And laughter holding both his sides!

For to a certainty this does not sound like John Milton; wherefore, let us have a Deutero-Milton to account for it.

And it might just as reasonably be insisted that the author of the somber "Macbeth" could not have written Ann Hathaway:

> She hath a way to chase despair,
> To heal all griefs, to cure all care,
> Turn foulest night to fairest day;
> Thou knowest, fond heart, she hath a way;
> Ann hath a way.

The "internal evidence" here is so conclusive against Shakespeare that a Deutero-Shakespeare must be called in to explain it.

By a corresponding line of argument we are bound to conclude that the Professor of the Higher Mathematics who is commonly supposed to have written "Alice in Wonderland" could never have done it. There must be a Deutero-Lewis Carroll. The same sort of logic makes it impossible that the author of "The Innocents Abroad" should have

produced such a serious biography as "Joan of Arc": wherefore, give us a Deutero-Mark Twain to account for it.

But suppose for a moment that Isaiah did not write it; what difference does it make? The song is there, and in it is the breath of inspiration. Oh, these paltering critics! These hair-splitters and wire-drawers, who strain at a gnat of difficulty and swallow a camel of unbelief! These catch-penny "experts," who bring all their optical instruments to bear upon the analysis of a fly speck in the margin of the Book while overlooking the wonderful outlines of the great verities within it! The mountain verily "travails and brings forth a mouse." What are sacred authors, anyway, but mediums through whom God breathes his truth toward men? The evidence is all in favor of the authorship of Isaiah; but whether he wrote this outburst of melody or not, the song is there and the song is ours. Bring your harps and cymbals; and let us sing, "I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength; he also is become my salvation!"

In any case one thing is certain. This song was written by a pilgrim going through a dry and thirsty land to a better country, famishing for water and longing for the fountains and wells. And, so far forth, we are at one with the singer; for we are all pilgrims and sojourners, like Israel in the Desert. The suns are blazing above and the sands scorching beneath; but, blessed be God, there are elims all along the way! The palm-groves in the

distance wave and beckon as if to say, "Come, rest in our shadow, and drink of the wells!"

These wells of salvation are seven, like those of Beersheba; and all alike yield the water of life.

The first is the well of Faith.

At the very outset of the journey we come upon it; for faith marks the beginning of Christian experience. He that believeth shall enter into life.

I knew a lad, about fifty years ago, who could not sleep for thirst. He had listened to the Gospel in the village church and heard it at his mother's knee; but, as for seeing and believing, he could not. Christ was no personal Saviour for him. But one bright day the veil was lifted and he saw. Oh, happy day! It was up in a hay-loft; and the vision came when he was kneeling on the hay. He saw and believed. For half a century he has known the sweet waters; and:

> My soul shall at that fountain drink
> When all the springs are dry.

The second of the wells is Prayer.

To your knees, O friend, when "oppressed by noon-day's scorching heat!" Kneel down and drink! To philosophize about the rationale of prayer is not drinking. Satisfy the longing of your soul. Drink deep! Let the peace of God that passeth all understanding come into your soul; then sing—

Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer;
May I thy consolation share,
Till from Mount Pisgah's lofty height
I view my home and take my flight!
This robe of flesh I'll drop, and rise
To seize the everlasting prize,
And shout, while passing through the air,
Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer!

For faith shall ultimately be lost in sight, and hope in open vision, and prayer in everlasting praise.

The third of the wells on our journey is the Bible.

A deep well this, springing from the very heart of the Rock of Ages; for the Bible is more than "a book among books," having been "written by holy men as they were moved by the Spirit of God." Its waters are not like those of other books, cisterns hewn out by art and man's device, oftentimes brackish and unwholesome. There is no surface-drainage of human wisdom here. To the weary and heavy laden there can be no sweeter draught than a promise from the Word of God.

A lady and her daughter, who had been paying kindly visits to an old woman in a humble cottage, found her always with a Bible on her knees. One day the daughter said, "Ask her, mother, if she never gets tired of it." The cottager overheard and answered, "No, dearie, never! It grows fresher every day."

You need this water, my friend. You have spent enough of your time in the vain effort to analyze

it. If you are thirsty, just drink; and see for yourself how it satisfies the soul. Drink and sing—

Word of the everlasting God!
Will of his glorious Son!
Without thee, how could earth be trod,
Or Heaven itself be won?

The fourth of the wells is Fellowship.

We do not kneel alone at this well. There are many thirsty ones who bend beside us; and "as iron sharpeneth iron so a man sharpeneth the face of his friend." Blessed be God who hath made us sit together in heavenly places! Don't look at your neighbor, now, to find fault with him. Doubtless he is not the sort of Christian he ought to be; but no more are you. Of all who crowd about this well not one is a perfect saint as yet: all are but sinners saved by grace. Move up a little closer, then; and drink and sing—

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love:
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above!

The fifth of the wells is Service.

This is close by the edge of a harvest-field; and those who approach it come with sleeves rolled up and sickles in hand, wiping the perspiration from their brows. But, oh, how great to be in such service! It is blessed to get weary for a Lord like ours. It is a foretaste of heaven to feel, at the close of a busy day, that we have not merely said our prayers and repeated our creeds, but have done

faithful reaping for him. How grateful, then, the waters of this well! We return to our tasks refreshed and strengthened, singing—

One more day's work for Jesus!
Oh, yes, a weary day;
But heaven shines clearer,
And rest comes nearer
At each step of the way.
And Christ in all—
Before his face I fall.

Oh, blessed work for Jesus!
Oh, rest at Jesus' feet!
There toil seems pleasure,
My wants are treasure,
And pain for him is sweet.
Lord, if I may,
I'll serve another day.

And sixth, the well of Consolation.

You will find it in Baca, the Valley of Tears. Here is where Hagar found it when wandering in the Wilderness with her little son. The water-skin was empty and the child was famishing. "And she went and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot, saying, Let me not look upon the death of the child." And the angel of God called unto Hagar and said unto her, "What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not!" And her eyes were opened and "she saw a well of water and gave the lad to drink." Are you, too, wandering in the Valley of Tears? Listen and you shall hear God speak. Listen again and you shall hear the murmur of water. Brood no more over your sor-

rows. Stoop down and drink and go your way, singing—

Joy of the desolate, light of the straying,
Hope of the penitent, fadeless and pure!
Here speaks the Comforter, tenderly saying,
Earth has no sorrows that heaven can not cure.

The seventh of the wells is Hope.

Its waters are clearest of all; so clear that if you look down into them you shall see heaven reflected there; a vision of "the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God." If this life were all, then should we be, indeed, of all men most miserable; but ours is "the hope that maketh not ashamed." There is something beyond! Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. Drink of this well when the sordid world has gripped you hard; and, still drinking, keep your eyes on the vision; while you sing—

O mother dear, Jerusalem,
When shall I come to thee?
When shall my sorrows have an end?
Thy joys when shall I see?

Thy walls are made of precious stones,
Thy bulwarks diamonds square;
Thy gates are of right Orient pearl;
O God, if I were there!

These are the seven Wells of the Desert.

But there is yet another—deeper, clearer and more refreshing than all. It is the well for which David longed, when hunted like a bird among the

mountains: "Oh, that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" There is no other like the well of Bethlehem. Christ himself is our Fountain of Life.

The singular thing about this well is that, like the water that gushed forth at Meribah, where Moses smote the rock, it follows the pilgrim all along the way. "For they drank," says Paul, "of a spiritual Rock that followed them: and the rock was Christ." There are no long stretches of thirst between the wells of the desert for those who keep in vital touch with him.

It was "the last day, the great day of the feast" in Jerusalem. The concluding ceremony, known as "the Effusion of Waters," had just been enacted: the high priest coming up from the Pool of Siloam with a pitcher on his shoulder had emptied it upon the pavement of Solomon's Porch, to signify the pouring out of the souls of the people before their God. Then the benediction, and all would be over; the people were about to disperse to their homes. At this juncture the voice of Jesus was heard, crying: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, from within shall flow rivers of living water!" Aye, water of life! The life that no water can give but that which gushes from the smitten Rock of Ages!

Have you heard his voice? Have you refreshed your soul with the strengthening and healing waters of the King's well?

The weary Christ who paused at Jacob's well in Sychar asked a drink of the woman who came to draw. When she hesitated he said, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee 'Give me to drink,' thou wouldst have asked of him and he would have given thee living water." Oh, if thou knewest! For whosoever drinketh of this water shall never thirst; but it shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

The world is full of invitations to the King's well. "The Spirit and the bride say Come, and he that heareth, let him say Come, and he that is athirst let him come: and he that will let him take the water of life freely."

The water is free; but one may stand by the King's well and perish of spiritual thirst, if he will not drink. Wherefore drink, my friend, and quench the longing of your soul. The invitation has come to you again and again. Here is a verse you surely can sing:

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Behold, I freely give
The living water, thirsty one;
Stoop down, and drink, and live.

But can you go on singing? There is life in the next verse for you:

I came to Jesus; and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched,
My soul revived,
And now I live in him!

8. *PRAYER*

Lord, refresh me with thy grace. The journey is long and the sun hot and the burden heavy. Oh, for a drink of water from the well beside the gate of Bethlehem! Tell me again that all things are working for my good. Walk thou with me, so that heart and flesh fail not. I can do all things when thou strengthenest me. Be thou my strength and my exceeding great reward; for thy Name's sake. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "I heard the voice of Jesus say."

10. *BENEDICTION*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

NINTH SERVICE

Tempted and Tried

1. *INVOCATION*

ALMIGHTY God, Source of all good and Fountain of blessing, look upon me with favor in this hour. I confess my personal unworthiness, but plead the righteousness of Christ. For his sake graciously receive me into thy presence and accept my worship. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "Take my heart, O Father, take it!"

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Genesis 3:1-6.
James 1.

4. *PRAYER*

Have mercy upon me, O God, according unto thy loving-kindness, and according unto thy tender mercies blot out my transgression. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. I believe in the purifying virtue of the Fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins. I am trusting only in him whose blood

cleanseth from sin. Blessed be thy Name for the assurance of faith. There is no more condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Baptize me with the influence of thy sanctifying Spirit, that I may continually grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. Make me submissive under chastisement, faithful in service, and acquiescent in thy holy will. Give me a broad heart of sympathy, and eagerness to help all who need me. Make me charitable toward sinners, but intolerant toward sin. Keep me loyal to the truth as thou hast given me to see it. Strengthen thy Church for the propagation of the Gospel. Stretch her curtains and enlarge her borders. Put down wickedness in high and low places. Make a speedy end of war, and hasten the time when men and nations shall rest in the truce of God. To this end put the spirit of peace with righteousness into the hearts of all rulers and potentates. Speed thy coming, O Prince of Peace, to rule in equity from the river unto the ends of the earth. For thou art worthy to receive glory, and honor, and dominion and power forever and ever. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "Lord, I hear of showers of blessing."

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

Tempted and Tried

> "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations; knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing." (James 1: 2-4.)

IN one of Paul's letters to the Christians at Corinth he says, "There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." The same might be written to the people of any modern community. Were there wineshops along the streets of Corinth? So there are, in horrid multiplicity, along the streets of New York. Were there painted women leering at the open windows? So there are among us. Were there idol-meats for sale in the shambles? So there are now. Temptation is "common to man." Adam was tempted in Paradise; Abraham at Beersheba; Lot in Sodom; Moses in Midian; Daniel in Babylon; and Christ in the Wilderness. There is no escaping it.

And temptation is as necessary as it is common to man. It is built into the constitution of the race. In the case of Adam it was necessary for the cultivation of character. He was created innocent; but innocency is not character. A graven image is free from sin. If Adam was to be a man he must be positively one thing or the other; either good or bad. To that end he must be tested; wherefore he was told not to eat of the fruit of the forbidden

tree. A tree would answer as well as anything else; the point being that he must be put through some sort of ordeal to determine whether or not he would obey the behest of God. Unfortunately both for him and for us he fell; and in falling he put himself and his children after him in the way of contracting the habit of sin.

In the case of Christ—who is called "the second Adam," because he also stood as the representative man—temptation was necessary for a different reason. He had come into the world to be the knight-errant of our fallen race, that he might deliver us from the penalty and the power of sin. To this end he must enter into full fellowship with humanity, in order that he might become a high-priest, able to be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He was, therefore, "in all points tempted like as we are." But, unlike the first Adam, he stood the test. He was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

In your case and mine temptation is necessary for the development of the graces that constitute character; wherefore, it is written, "We also rejoice in our tribulation; knowing that tribulation worketh steadfastness; and steadfastness, approvedness; and approvedness, hope; and hope putteth not to shame." A ship swinging at anchor in the bay is of little or no use. Out yonder on the open seas there is danger; there are fogs and gales and hidden reefs; but what matters it? The ship must hoist anchor and venture forth, or she will take no

part in the commerce of the world. So must a man meet the grapple of adverse forces if he would make his life tell. "The North wind makes Vikings." A man of spirit will not shrink from taking heaven with the wind in his face.

It is a great thing, in point of fact, to be capable of trial. "How much better is a man than a sheep?" We are made in the likeness of God. And, though we have fallen from our high estate, there are possibilities of goodness and greatness in us, which must somehow be brought out. And God our Father is profoundly interested in doing it.

This brings us directly to the matter in hand. We want to know precisely what God's relation is to the temptations that beset us. And the Scriptures are very clear on this point.

First. *We are advised that God does not tempt any man.* It is written, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God can not be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man."

Secondly. *It is equally clear from the teaching of Scripture that God leads us into temptation.* The Evangelists agree in saying that Jesus was "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." One of them puts it in even more emphatic form, saying, "The Spirit driveth him forth." And, for reasons already indicated, we are treated in the same way.

It must be understood that there is no sin in being tempted. A man may be compassed about

by devils with no fault of his own. If Samson had been called down to Timnath on business it would have been no sin to pass Delilah on the street; but it was a different matter when he went to Timnath for the express purpose of meeting her, called at her house and laid his head in her lap. Luther says, "We can not prevent the birds from flying over our heads; but we can prevent them from building their nests in our hair." So God does not lead us into sin when he leads us into temptation.

It is related that when the Black Prince had arrived at years of discretion his father, Edward III, deeming it necessary to wean him from the effeminate pleasures of the court, placed him in command of a troop at the battle of Creçy. In the heat of conflict a messenger came riding in great haste to say that the prince was surrounded by the enemy. The king asked, "Is he wounded?" The answer was, "Nay; but in mighty peril." Then the king said, "Tell him that he hath this day an opportunity to win his spurs; and bid him not call upon me until he is in mortal extremity." For a like reason we are divinely led into temptation, that we may win our spurs; but our Father is ever near at hand and ready to help us.

Thirdly. *God could lead us around temptation, were he so disposed, and could wholly avert it.* This is taught in the words of Jesus, "And when ye pray say, 'Our Father who art in heaven, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.' "

The question at once arises, If God leads us into

temptation, how can we pray, "Lead us not into it"? But, inasmuch as we are not acquainted with the Divine plan concerning us, why should we not pray to be saved from the peril of temptation so far as this may be consistent with our good and the glory of God? Is it not a most natural thing to ask? Do we not pray in like manner to be delivered from pain and sickness and adversity? All such prayers, be it remembered, are offered in the filial spirit and only by such as can say "Our Father." By that token they are always acquiescent in the Divine will.

If we go to Gethsemane we shall find the only-begotten Son making just such a prayer. When the purple cup of death was pressed to his lips every nerve and sinew quivered and shrank from it. "O my Father," he cried, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." And sweating as it were great drops of blood he cried again, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." That cup was filled with the death that was due to us. He as our substitute must drink it or else we ourselves must drink it. Wherefore, he cried again, "O my Father, if it be not possible, thy will be done!" In a like filial spirit we pray, "Lead us not into temptation." But observe, the prayer does not end that way: let us have the whole of it: "Lead us not into temptation; *but* deliver us from evil." It is precisely as if we said, "O Father, if it be possible, save us from the bitter hour of trial; but in any case save us from sin!"

It is recorded that Jesus said to Peter, in anticipation of his approaching hour of temptation in the judgment hall, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." (Matt. 26:41.) And again, with the same trial in view, he said to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." It thus appears that, while Peter was advised to pray that he might not enter into temptation, the prayer of the far-seeing Christ was that in the hour of temptation the faith of Peter might not fail. The result makes it appear that Peter was tried and did temporarily fall, in denying his Lord; but also that he learned his lesson and was thereby enabled to "strengthen the brethren," and that his faith failed not.

Fourthly. *We are advised that in the hour of temptation we may be divinely sustained if we will have it so.* Thus it is written, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." (1 Cor. 10:13.)

The stress of temptation is never beyond our strength. "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." His promise is, "As thy day so shall thy strength be." I have no sympathy with a drunkard, who says, "I can't help it." He can; he simply doesn't want to. No doubt a man can by habitual indulgence so vitiate and enfeeble his will that it is a frightfully hard thing to resist the intoxicating

cup; but there is no one but himself to blame for that. And, even in this case, there is a definite hope in Divine help if he chooses to accept it. The gates of hell can not prevail against a man who is buttressed by the power of God.

In all the universe there is no force that can compel a man to sin. The most that Satan could say to Christ in the Wilderness was, "Cast *thyself* down." He could not cast him down, nor could he oblige Christ to do it. Every sin is, in the nature of the case, voluntary—never involuntary. No man is responsible for what he can not avoid; but no full-grown man ought to be willing to plead the baby act. "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves if we are underlings." We have infinite resources at our command in the promise of Divine help; wherefore "Be strong! Quit you like men!"

The old story of the Babylonish youths in the furnace is full of suggestion. (Dan. 3.) For refusing to bow down before the golden image they were summoned before the king, who gave them the choice of idolatry or death. Their answer was, "We have no need to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up!" That was enough; they were bound and cast into the furnace. The

king looked in and was astonished. He said to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered, "True, O king!" He said, "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire and they have no hurt! and the aspect of the fourth is like a son of the gods." Here is our defense in Temptation: the fourth Man in the fire. God is faithful, and he has said, "I will deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee."

Fifthly. *We triumph over temptation when we thus allow God to help us.* "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been approved he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." (James 1: 12.)

Of all the joys that are possible to mortal man there is none to be compared with that which we experience in triumphing over a besetting sin. So did the young stripling rejoice when he brought the gory head of Goliath up to the king's tent, saying, "I have overcome in the name of the God of Israel!"

It is recorded that, when the temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness was over, "angels came and ministered unto him." In the struggle of life we are "compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses." All heaven is interested in seeing us get the better of our sins.

And every such victory adds to our strength of character. The Moslems say that the man who

slays his enemy in battle absorbs the strength of his vanquished foe. There is a truth here for every earnest soul in the grapple with sin. Great are the promises to him who triumphs. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God."—"He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."—"To him that overcometh will I give the morning star."—"He that overcometh shall be arrayed in white garments; and I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels."—"He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God."—"He that overcometh I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father in his throne."—"To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna; and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it." Oh, blessed overcoming! Oh, glorious crown of life!

It may be that some one now reading these words is facing a fierce temptation. How shall he meet it? By self-dependence? Shall the oft-taught lesson of experience go for naught? "Is any tempted, let him pray." There is "a way of escape"; but it is not the path of self-reliance. Resolutions fail when there is no strong staff to lean on. Prayer is the secret passage to the light. Try prayer, my friend—and see Christ coming to your aid! Lean hard on him. He has been

through temptation and "can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities." His arm is an almighty arm. He never failed a man yet. He not only pardons, but saves from the power of sin. He enables us to say, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

The shining seats of heaven are full of sinners who have passed through the hard grapple with temptation, and are "more than conquerors" by the grace of God. Listen to this: "I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, . . . standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God! . . . And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, These that are arrayed in the white robes, who are they, and whence came they? And I say unto him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they that come out of the great tribulation"—out of the harrowing of trial—"and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. *Therefore* are they before the throne of God."

Oh, for the white robes and the palm of victory! Blessed is the man that endureth temptation! The possibilities of character and life and the unfading crown are in it. God help us to endure and to come off victorious, that

we, too, may wave palm branches before the throne of God!

8. *PRAYER*

I need thee every hour, most gracious Lord. In the stress of temptation grant thine immediate help, so that I yield not. Help me to see sin as thou seest it. Help me to hate and abhor and flee from it. Show me the beauty of holiness, so that I shall be enamoured of it. Make me more like Jesus in faith and power and steadfastness. And thou shalt have everlasting praise. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "Am I a soldier of the Cross?"

10. *BENEDICTION*

Grace, mercy and peace be with thee. Amen.

TENTH SERVICE

A Triple Tragedy

1. *INVOCATION*

HOLY, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is and is to come! Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; wherefore purge me from my sins, for Jesus' sake, that I may worthily draw near. Be pleased to fill this hour with blessing, and thy Name shall have the praise. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "Jesus calls us o'er the tumult."

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Isaiah 53:1-10.
Galatians 6.

4. *PRAYER*

Blessed be thou, O God, who hast blessed me with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Help me to pour out my soul penitently and gratefully before thee. Notwithstanding my sins and shortcomings, thou hast continued thy loving-kindness and pardoning Grace. I have no burden that I can not bear when thou art with me. Thou art a very present help in time of trouble, a

refuge from the storm and a shadow from the heat. Thy chastening may be grievous; but, inasmuch as it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, I would be thankful for it. Be pleased to confirm my faith, that I may go on from strength to strength, until I appear in Zion before thee. Quicken those who are dead in trespasses and sins; reclaim the wandering and increase the zeal of those who faithfully serve thee. Give power to thy Word, wherever it may be taught or preached this day, that sinners may be saved and saints built up in thy most holy faith. Use thy Church as a great labor-guild for the reaping and ingathering of the harvest of souls. Send more and more laborers into the harvest; and make thou me one. Thou knowest I believe and love thee. Help me to show my faith by works and my love by a consuming zeal. Lord, may sinners find no stumbling-block in my unworthy life; help me rather to persuade them, by earnest word and holy living, to come unto thee. I want to invest all my powers for thee, so that when my day's work is over I may hear thee say, "Well done, good servant." Show me the next thing I ought to do, and by thy Grace I will do it. Grant thy Grace, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "He leadeth me."

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

A Triple Tragedy

> "But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me and I unto the world." (Gal. 6: 14.)

A GREAT law is stated here. It is a law that prevails everywhere in both the natural and the spiritual world; to wit, Life out of Death. It is dwelt on with much emphasis in the teaching of Jesus; as where He says, "Whosover would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it."

An illustration is found in the process of germination: "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." Ask the husbandman who scatters wheat on his plowed field why he thus broadcasts the food which is necessary to sustain life, and he will answer, "Wait and see! The fields will presently be white unto the harvest. The loaded wains will come groaning to the granaries. The millstones will revolve, and the hungry will eat. I consecrate the seed-corn to death; but behold it will reappear in the issues of a vaster life."

The analogy, however, must not be pressed too far. It holds as an illustration but not as a parallel, since the wheat does not really die. Were it not that life lingers in the germ, there would be no harvest. The law of the natural world is laid down by Professor Tyndall, in these words: "It is a sci-

entific fact that life proceeds from life and from nothing but life." All efforts of biological chemists to quicken an inanimate thing have been unavailing. But the moment you cross the border into the realm of the supernatural, the law is precisely reversed. Here life proceeds from death, and from nothing but death. *Mors janua vitæ.* The King of Terrors is bound to the chariot of Life.

And this is the occasion of Paul's boasting. In his association with Christ the Life-giver, he has solved the problem. He sets it forth under the figure of a triple tragedy. Here are three crosses; each an effigy of death, and each the source and fountain of a larger life.

I. *"I glory in the cross of Jesus Christ."*

Was he then oblivious of the fact that the cross was a symbol of shame? It was set apart for the execution of slaves and malefactors of the deepest dye. The shame was so pronounced that it passed into a proverb: "Cursed is every one who hangeth on a tree." Yet this, the gentlest born and noblest bred of the Apostles, glories in it. It is as if a man were to boast of the fact that his father died on the gallows-tree. How shall we account for it?

As to the fact of Jesus' death, there can be no shadow of doubt. Ask the centurion who had charge of his execution and he will say, "Aye: this is the spear which I thrust into his side; behold the stain of his heart's blood upon it!" Ask the commander of the garrison at Castle Antonia, and he

will show you the death certificate, bearing the imperial seal. Ask the rabbis of the Sanhedrin, and they will answer, "The delegation appointed to witness the execution have brought us a satisfactory report. The Nazarene is dead; we shall hear no further of his doctrine and alleged miracles; he will trouble us no more." Ask John and he will reply, "As we were removing his body from the cross in the twilight, I laid my hand upon his heart, and it was cold and still. His pulse was still. We hoped that it was he who should deliver Israel; but alas! he is dead!" Aye, Jesus is dead. On this all are agreed.

Dead? Then why this universal commotion about him? Why, after the lapse of eighteen centuries, do his enemies still rail at him? How will you account for his place in literature? Books, books, books, about Jesus! What means the ringing of these church-bells, this preaching from tens of thousands of pulpits on the glory of Christ; and the testimony of an ever-increasing multitude of men and women that he with mighty hand has lifted them out of the miry pit and set their feet upon an everlasting rock? And why this world-wide chorus,

> In the cross of Christ I glory
> Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
> All the light of sacred story
> Gathers round its head sublime?

A dead Christ? Where are his peers? Let Napoleon speak from his lonely retreat at St.

Helena: "You tell of the Cæsars and Alexanders, of their conquests, of the enthusiasm which they enkindled in the hearts of their soldiers; but think of the conquests of this dead man! Can you conceive of Cæsar from the depth of his mausoleum watching over the destinies of Rome? Yet here is an arm that for eighteen centuries has protected the Church from all storms that have threatened to engulf it." He walks alone to-day upon the heights of influence, as Jean Paul said: "Purest among the mightiest and mightiest among the pure." No mortal can with him compare among the sons of men!

It is fondly hoped that national disputes are henceforth to be settled by arbitration. In that event the Great Powers will all be represented. But when the commissioners have taken their places, they will not be able to proceed with the business in hand until the door opens and One enters before whom all must bow in reverence. The first word and the last word in the adjustment of every problem of civilization is uttered by the Man who was executed at Golgotha. What does this mean? It means that Christ, by His atoning death, has attained to an ever-increasing life and influence among men and nations. Out of heaven there comes a voice, "I am the Living One; and I was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades!"

II. *We turn now to the second cross, and hear Paul saying, "I have been crucified with Christ."*

In this, also, he finds an occasion of boasting. He might have gloried in his noble birth, his liberal education, his Roman citizenship or his honorable laurels won in earthly parliaments; but, if he must needs glory, he will glory in the fact that he has entered into the fellowship of the shameful death of Christ.

Who is this "I" that died with Jesus on the cross? In the philosophy of Paul man is regarded as a dual personality. The "old man" and the "new man"—that is, the lower and the higher nature—are ever struggling for mastery. They are also characterized as "flesh" and "spirit." The one is base, sordid, sensual and hostile to God; the other is "created in Christ Jesus unto righteousness and true holiness." A man's growth in character is measured by the triumph of his higher over his lower nature. It was old Saul of Tarsus who was crucified with Christ—the Saul who went down to Damascus breathing out slaughter against the followers of Christ. He died on the highway when the great light fell upon him, and the Voice said, "I am Jesus!" In that moment a new man was born and began to live with the cry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

The man who has passed through this transformation lives in a truer sense than ever before. Paul, standing by the cross whereon Saul of Tarsus died, cries triumphantly, "I have been crucified with Christ! and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me!"

The new man is a free man. He is released from the bondage of sin. The past, which was like a ball and chain upon him, is gone. The blood of Christ has cleansed him. He is delivered, also, from the bondage of the Law. Saul of Tarsus stood at Sinai, fearing and trembling under the sentence, "The soul that sinneth it shall die!" Paul the Apostle, having learned obedience in love, has passed into the glorious liberty of the children of God. He has seen his Lord nailing "the handwriting of ordinances" to his cross and taking it out of the way.

He is delivered, also, from the bondage of death; not that he must not pass through dissolution like other men; but this means little to him, now that the gates of heaven are open beyond the tomb. He hears his Master saying, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die!" The death beyond is not for him, since "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." He hears the footfall of his executioner in the corridor of the Mammertine jail and answers, "I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me the crown!"—"O grave, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law; but

thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Thus, by the death of the old nature, we attain unto newness of life. We come forth out of the sepulcher of the flesh into the Kingdom of the Spirit, where we live upon a higher level and breathe a clearer atmosphere with God. It is as when one stands upon a summit of a mountain and looks down on those who plod along the lower paths. What mites and midgets are these, who bustle to and fro in pursuit of things that perish with the using! Up here are life and immortality. I died down yonder on the cross that I might live up here with God. I buried all and I have all.

III. *On the third cross "the world is crucified to me."*

The "world," thus referred to, is not that *cosmos* of right and order, of innocent pursuit and pleasure, which God intended for us; but rather the world indicated in the phrase "lust of the flesh, lust of the eye and pride of life." This is the world which is ever at enmity with God. It may be defined as the sum total of all influences that make for spiritual and eternal death, of all that drag us down and away from the life that we were intended to live. It is the world of which it is written, "The friendship of the world is enmity against God." To one who has passed through the new birth, which makes a follower of Christ, the world thus defined is crucified. It dies hard; but it is surely stricken with death; and it dies more and more as the proc-

ess of sanctification goes on. The process is radical; as it is written, "Even now the ax lieth at the root of the trees." The demand of Christ is exclusive: "Ye can not serve God and mammon. Go sell all that thou hast, and come, follow me."

In the hour of his conversion, Paul turned his back upon the world of sin. *Inspexit et despexit!* He beheld and renounced it. He defines that renunciation in this wise: "What things were gain to me these I counted loss for Christ. Yea, verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead." His reference is not to the final resurrection, but to that which is here and now.

But the world, thus crucified, also rises, in newness of life. It lives again to every follower of Christ; a new world in which all that makes life worth living is multiplied a hundredfold. The pursuits of the world are wealth, pleasure, and honor. Can a Christian pursue these? Yes, with more intensity than ever; but in a different way. It

is the business of every follower of Christ to acquire wealth, so far as it is possible by honest methods, because in so doing he increases his power for God. It takes money to print Bibles, to equip churches, to build schools and hospitals and reformatories, to charter missionary ships and carry the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. But let it be observed the new-born man is urged to the acquisition of wealth by a motive far higher than that which previously prompted him. He is now the servant of Christ, and whatever he gets or gains is to be used wholly for Christ. He is no longer an owner, but a steward. He acquires, that he may with his substance glorify God. On every dollar he earns is the image and superscription of the King; and thus, by honestly earning and properly spending, he enriches himself toward God.

Is a Christian free to pursue pleasure? More than ever. No pleasures are banned except those which are defiled with sin. A Christian is under bonds to forsake no pleasure that any self-respecting man can indulge in. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; but remember . . . !" Remember that as a follower of Christ you are bound to keep your conscience pure. All pleasure is banned that dulls the fine edge of the moral sense or separates the soul from God. Away, therefore, with all sensual passion, all mad dissipation, the laughter which is as the crackling of thorns; but welcome peace of conscience, the generous pleasure of kindly

deeds, the merry-making or Cana with the benediction of Christ upon it!

Is a Christian free to pursue honor also? Aye: not for its own sake, indeed; but that he may make the most of himself and enlarge his influence to the utmost in the service of Christ. Let him win all possible crowns and diadems; but only that he may lay them at his Master's feet and crown him Lord of all.

So, then, in Paul's manifesto we have the apologue of life. Life out of death! On one cross Jesus dies; and a voice is heard saying, "I am the Living One; and I was dead, and, behold, I am alive forevermore." On the second cross I die: "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." On the third cross the world dies—the world of shame and selfishness and false ambition; but beyond it there opens up another world, a royal demesne of high privilege, to which the Lord welcomes us.

And this is life. How shall we attain unto it? We go by the steep pathway to the stars. No man reaches life who is not willing to die for it. He must give up all if he would possess all. He must enter into the fellowship of the death of Christ if he would be glorified with him. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." No cross, no crown. To win that crown, we place our hand in Christ's, saying, "I will die with thee, that I may live with thee."

Thine, Jesus, thine!
No more this heart of mine
Would find its joy apart from thee;
The world is crucified to me,
And I am thine, Lord Jesus, thine!

8. *PRAYER*

O thou blessed Lord, who didst bear the bitter shame of the cross, grant that thy blood may purge me from dead works to serve the living God! Help me so to dedicate myself to thy service that there may be no reservation in my vows. Take me, body and soul, into thy care and keeping. Control and guide me, until the day break and the shadows flee away and I find myself forever with thee. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "Love divine, all loves excelling."

10. *BENEDICTION*

Grace, mercy and peace, from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, be with you. Amen.

ELEVENTH SERVICE

The Great Healer

1. *INVOCATION*

O LORD, how amiable are thy tabernacles! Yea, even the little tabernacles, where the humble commune with thee. It is a great thing for a mortal to meet thee face to face; yet this I pray and long for. As of old thou didst manifest thy presence from between the wings of the cherubim, so, Lord, be pleased to show thyself now unto me. And let this be an hour of blessing; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "Come, ye disconsolate."

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Psalm 107:1-21.
Luke 5:17-32.

4. *PRAYER*

O King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God; to thee be glory and majesty, dominion and power, world without end. I pray for a revelation of truth. Open unto me thy holy Word, whose entrance giveth light. Make the great verities of the spiritual life so clear that my impressions may be deepened into convictions; then let the

sanctifying Spirit bring those convictions to a plenteous fruitage in my life. Save me from mere intellectual faith and outward form. Save me from the religion of the Pharisees, with its tithe of garden herbs. Save me from the self-righteousness of the Laodiceans, and give me the gold of truth, that I may be rich, the white raiment of holiness, that I may be suitably clothed for heaven; and anoint mine eyes with thy saving grace, that I may see the relative value of temporal and spiritual things. Call me into thy service with a clearer call, and help me to run in the way of thy commandments. If thou hast appointed unto me a lonely place of toil or suffering, help me to abide there, obedient and glad either to do or to suffer thy holy will. Gracious Lord and Saviour, let thy mercy rest on all afflicted souls. Hear thou the cry of those who call upon thee out of the Valley of Tears. Bless thy servants who go forth into the white harvest; and may they return with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them. Save sinners and sanctify saints, O Spirit of the Living God. Let the Christ of Calvary see of the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Make this one of thy great days in Zion; make it a day of rejoicing in heaven because of the bringing in of many prisoners of hope, to the glory of thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "I was a wandering sheep."

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

The Great Healer

> "And amazement took hold on all, and they glorified God; and they were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day." (Luke 5:26.)

A DOCTOR had come to town and invited the people to bring all their sick for consultation and treatment free of charge. The open court and piazzas of the house where he was staying were thronged with patients and their friends. The lame came hobbling to the clinic; mothers brought their ailing children in their arms; some of the sufferers were carried on litters; and "the power of the Lord was present to heal them." There were scribes and rabbis also, with official members of the synagogues from the neighboring towns, looking on with critical eyes. It was a great day for Capernaum; for many a home that had been darkened by the spectral shadow of disease was made to rejoice with exceeding joy.

The man who tells the story of the clinic was present that day; and he was competent to speak in these premises, being himself a physician. He was a master of therapeutics and skilled in the use of the medicaments of his time; and he shared in

the general amazement, never having "seen things on this fashion." Here was a Doctor without a diploma, unlearned in the methods of the schools, who quite eclipsed him and all others of his craft. It was little wonder that the people "were amazed." No doubt some of them spoke of "wizardry and legerdemain," perhaps even of sorcery and "the black art"; for indeed they saw "strange things" that day.

I have a warm place in my heart for the medical profession. The greatest thing in the world is to be a preacher of the unsearchable riches of Christ; but the next greatest is to be called and equipped for the healing of the ills that human flesh is heir to. The two professions, though they were combined in Christ, are quite separate and distinct; and I, for one, am very willing that physicians shall attend to their vocation while I attend to mine. This Church does not expect to have a hospital annex connected with it. The average clergyman, if he addresses himself to his spiritual functions, has all that he can do.

On a morning in June, more than twenty years ago, I landed from a little boat in the town of Ardrossan in Scotland. It was very early, and making my way along the silent street I turned into a by-path leading upward to a ruined castle which was seen dimly through the overhanging mist. Presently I paused to rest on the pedestal of a wayside monument. On its shaft was this inscription:

HERE LIES
ALEXANDER MACFADZEAN, M.D.
THIS MONUMENT IS ERECTED
BY THE CITIZENS OF THIS TOWN
IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE
OF THEIR
GOOD PHYSICIAN
HIS WORKS DO PRAISE HIM

There are many such memorials all over the world; but there never lived, through all the centuries, a physician who could be compared with the Good Physician who held the clinic in Capernaum that day.

I. *He stood alone and solitary in his singular apprehension of the reality of pain.*

All doctors are brought into contact with suffering; but none has ever had occasion to know so closely or to deal so actually with its awful reality.

The Buddhists have a word, "maya," which is one of the keynotes of their religion. It means "illusion." To their minds all sensation whatsoever is unreal. Joy and grief, pain and pleasure, hope and disappointment, are all illusory, or "as the shadow of a dream." There are people among us who hold a like opinion, affirming that pain is merely "a belief of mortal mind." The fact that this gives direct contradiction to the physical senses should be enough to satisfy the average man.

Christ took a diametrically opposite view. It was because there was suffering in the world that he came from heaven to relieve it. He began his ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth, where he

preached on the text: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; he hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." It is written of him that "he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." His life was crowned with pain. Did he not suffer on the cross? If the three mortal hours of his Passion were not truly vicarious pain, then are we of all men most miserable; for vain is our faith, as we are yet in our sins.

II. *This Good Physician possessed also a singular insight with respect to suffering.*

The art of the physician lies largely in his ability to make a clear diagnosis. Not infrequently the most skillful practitioner is bound to say, "I do not know precisely what ails this patient"; and this because the malady lies within one of the closed chambers of life.

It is recorded of Charles II of England that in his last illness he had fourteen physicians. They bled and blistered, physicked and stimulated him in vain. Macaulay says: "They tortured him like an Indian at the stake." And it was finally left for an autopsy to reveal what ailed him.

But Christ made no mistake in diagnosis. He never attacked the symptoms of disease, but aimed directly at its seat; and he always cured.

Christ perceived what many physicians fail to perceive, that every disease is directly or remotely

traceable to sin. If there had never been sin, there would be no suffering in the world. Get rid of that taint in the blood, and red-faced Fever and pale Consumption will take their flight. "By this came all our woes." And the Good Physician came all the way from Heaven to heal the world of the taint of sin.

III. *Let it be observed, further, that this Good Physician healed without medicine.*

Others must use the *materia medica.* He healed with a word, or with a touch of his cunning fingers. As he walked among the couches of his patients he touched them, spoke to them, and they arose and went their way. It is as if a surgeon were to enter one of our public hospitals and, passing up and down among the wards, say, "Be whole!—Arise! —Receive thy sight!" and cure them all. Would not all witnesses unite in saying, "We have seen strange things to-day"?

The point in the phrase "strange things" is well taken; for in the case of Jesus the cures were all miracles; that is, they were wrought directly by the power of God.

And the greatest of the miracles of Jesus was forgiveness, as he said, "The Son of Man hath authority on earth to forgive sin." In that clinic at Capernaum there was one man, brought in a litter, who was desperately sick of the palsy. And Jesus said to him, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." The censorious scribes who were looking on lifted their eyebrows thereat, as if to say, "This

is easy; any one can say, Thy sins be forgiven!" And Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, "Why reason ye in your hearts? Which is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath authority on earth to forgive sins, I now say to the sick of the palsy, Arise, and take up thy couch and go unto thy house." And immediately the man rose up among them and departed, glorifying God. The meaning here is obvious. The miracles of Jesus were all parables; all alike illustrating the tremendous fact that he who could open the eyes of the blind, cleanse the leper and heal the paralytic could absolve the soul of the sinner from his sins. And this, the greatest of all wonders or miracles, is beyond the power of human art; it is the exclusive function and prerogative of the only-begotten Son of God.

IV. *And Jesus stood alone among all physicians, also, by reason of his invariable success.*

Others, having exhausted their resources, are often driven to confess, "I can do no more"; but he never failed. He rejoiced to apply his superhuman skill to what are called hopeless cases.

If ever there was a desperate case of blindness it was that of Bartimæus, the beggar who appealed to Jesus on the highway. Yet, at the word, "Receive thy sight!" he opened his eyes and fell in with the company, glorifying God.

If ever there was a hopeless case of hemorrhage it was that of the woman who "had spent all her

living on physicians" in the vain hope of cure. Yet when she merely touched the hem of his garment, "virtue went out of him," and the swift current of health went coursing through her veins.

If ever there was a desperate case of leprosy it was that of the man who, "being full of leprosy," fell before Jesus, saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean!" And he put forth his hand, saying, "I will; be thou clean," and immediately his leprosy departed from him.

If ever there was a hopeless case of sin it was that of the Magdalene, a woman of the town, notorious for her vicious life. Yet she was converted and saved by the power of his word, "Go in peace; thy faith hath saved thee!"

Yes, there was even a more desperate case than hers; namely, that of the thief who, having passed his years in outlawry, was condemned to death. *In articulo mortis* he raised his eyes penitently to Jesus, saying, "Lord, remember me!" and the answer came, like a swift decree from the throne of heavenly grace, "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise!"

By this we learn that the Good Physician knows no "hopeless cases." The most incurable malady is not beyond his skill. Let none despair, therefore; for his promise is, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

V. *Furthermore, this Good Physician exacted no fees.*

He presented no "doctor's bill." His services

were *gratis;* that is, of grace. Consultation and treatment, with a cure guaranteed, were without money and without price.

A few years ago one of our leading citizens, a multi-millionaire, was greatly concerned for his little daughter who was afflicted with a malady which no resident physician could cure. A specialist was sent for, from Germany, who, after affording relief, was rewarded with a fee of ten thousand dollars. And no doubt the father was only too ready to pay it.

But Christ asks only gratitude, and expects nothing else for his services. "What shall I render unto Jehovah for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of Jehovah. I will pay my vows unto Jehovah, yea, in the presence of all his people; in the courts of Jehovah's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye Jehovah!"

VI. *But, though no fee was exacted by this Physician, there was nevertheless a condition affixed to the promise of his healing grace.*

And it was a very reasonable condition; namely, that the patient should follow his directions. This covers all cases of both physical and spiritual healing. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

I believe in "faith-cure"; but the prayer for physical healing is subject to the condition referred to. The one who prays must do so with a filial spirit as a child of God. He must recognize the fact that God is wiser than man, and knows bet-

ter what is good for him. It may be that in his case, as in that of Lazarus, his "sickness is to the glory of God." It is quite possible that when he prays, as Paul did, to be delivered from some thorn in the flesh, the answer may be, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee!" He who would follow the directions of the Good Physician must be prepared always to preface his petition for healing with this: "Thy will be done!" To demand healing at the throne of heavenly grace is to take a most unwarrantable liberty with God. And it is evident that if such prayers were always answered, if every disease were cured at the imperative instance of the sufferer, no one would ever die. Then what a world this world of ours would be!

But in the case of prayers for spiritual healing the answer is always forthcoming; since sin is never to the glory of God. Here the direction of the Physician is, "Only believe"; that is, "Take me at my word. Be willing to be saved in my way. Put away all prejudgments that could interpose betwixt thee and me. Accept the proffer of my pardoning grace as fully and freely as I offer it. He that believeth in me hath everlasting life."

VII. *One thing more. The Good Physician was singular in his ubiquity.*

He never needed to be called. Those who profess to administer "absent treatment," in our time, are mere charlatans. He was never absent. His power was ever "present to heal."

So long as I live I shall remember a dreary night

in my boyhood when my mother awoke me, saying, "Run for the doctor; your father is dying!" I ran half-clad through the wintry night. I rang the doctor's bell. My lips were blue and my teeth chattering. I rang again; I shook the door. Oh, would the doctor never answer? Would he never come? And, when he did come, would he be able to help, after all?

There is no need to run for this Doctor. He is not far from anyone of us. He waits to be gracious. He is here now:

We may not climb the heavenly steeps
To bring the Lord Christ down;
In vain we search the lowest deeps,
For him no depths can drown;

But warm, sweet, tender, even yet
A present help is he;
And faith has yet its Olivet,
And love its Galilee.

The healing of his seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain;
We touch him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again.

There may be somebody whose eyes are now running along these lines that needs the Doctor. If he be groaning under a burden of physical pain, let him pray; for the Lord heareth. But let him pray aright and, though his malady may be not healed, by reason of a just consideration of his greater good, yet he will surely receive grace to bear it.

Or, he may be bending under the burden of a greater malady—that of unforgiven sin. He is oppressed by "a certain fearful looking-for of judgment." He has gone for relief to other physicians, to false philosophies in vain. Let him try Christ. Let him cry, "Have mercy, Lord! O Lord, forgive!" And the answer will come in the instant of faith—by the truth and the mercy of the living God, this answer will come, bringing peace and assurance: "Thy sins be forgiven thee!"

8. *PRAYER*

Be gracious, O Lord, in view of fleshly infirmities. Thou hast the healing touch; yea, there is health-giving power in the very hem of thy garment. But grant above all the restoration of my soul, sore-stricken. I believe thou didst suffer in my stead upon the bitter cross; wherefore say clearly unto me, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"; and I will praise thy Name forever. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "Arise, my soul, arise; shake off thy guilty fears."

10. *BENEDICTION*

The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift upon thee the light of his countenance and give thee peace. Amen.

TWELFTH SERVICE

The Kindest Word Ever Spoken

1. *INVOCATION*

I CRY unto thee, O Lord, my Rock; be not silent unto me. Let me hear thy voice in the place of communion. Speak thou comfortably unto me, that my heart may rejoice in thy salvation. Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path; for thy Name's sake. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "Awake, my soul, to joyful lays!"

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Psalm 27.
Matthew 11:15-30.

4. *PRAYER*

As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks so panteth my soul after thee, O God. Let thy gracious words be as springs of water on a weary journey through a dry and thirsty land. In pain and sorrow and loneliness may I find strength and refreshing in thee. Take away the last lingering thought of unforgiven sin, for Jesus' sake, and grant me a continual growth in grace by thy Spirit dwelling within and working in me. Incline my heart to self-

forgetfulness and my hands to ministries of mercy. Bless all who worship in thy courts. Give the baptism of fire and power to those who preach the unsearchable riches of Christ; and give to thy people everywhere the hearing ear and the understanding heart. Conquer sinners, comfort saints, and take glory to thyself this day. Bless our dear country. Let its rulers and magistrates be subject to thy holy Law. Long may our land be bright with freedom's holy light; protect us by thy might, great God, our King. Go thou with the heralds of thy Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. Hasten the time when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise in regions of darkness, and when the heathen shall come running unto thee. Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth for thee. Rend the heavens and come down. Take unto thyself thy great power and reign in thy life-giving majesty among all nations. Let the whole earth be full of thy glory. Amen and Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "Blow ye the trumpet, blow!"

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

The Kindest Word Ever Spoken

(Gen. 7:1; Matt. 11:28; Rev. 22:17.)

THE word is "Come." It is the kindest that was ever spoken. Its significance lies in the fact that it falls from the gracious lips of God.

If He were to stand forth visibly on the circle of the universe and call, "Come," the world would doubtless come running to him; but he makes no such theatrical appearance. He does not speak thus audibly to the children of men. His word of invitation, glowing on the pages of Scripture, must be received by faith; in default of faith it falls on heedless ears.

The word is commonplace to the average man. It is like a coin that has been so long in circulation that its image and superscription have worn off.

"To preach on this," said I to myself, "will be like the telling of an oft-told tale." But as I sat looking at the word it seemed to take on a new meaning. In it I saw Three Tragedies, the greatest tragedies that ever have occurred in this world of ours.

First, *the Tragedy of Sin;* for the word would never have needed to be spoken, had there not been a departure from God.

The opening words of "Paradise Lost" are these:

> Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world and all our woe,
> With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
> Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
> Sing heavenly Muse.

The scene as it presented itself to Milton's mind was Adam facing the forbidden tree. The voice of the Law was ringing in his ears, "Thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"; but another voice, that of the tempter, a low, insinuating voice, was saying "Yea, hath God said?" and the man, listening, hesitating, faltering, fell; and falling died the death of alienation from God. The voice that once he had loved to hear is calling now, "Adam, where art thou?" and he answers, "I was afraid and hid myself!" A fearing, cowering, hiding soul! There is the tragedy: A soul away from God!

But this is no question of "original sin." I do not say that we are unconcerned in that far-away tragedy in the Garden of Eden; but souls die not of original but of actual and personal sin. "As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, ye shall not have any more occasion to use this proverb in Israel, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge.' Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth it shall die!" (Ezek. 18:1-4.)

All sin, even the least, is tragical, because its issue is death. It alienates from the Law-giver, of necessity, since it is a wilful breach of the Law. To lie, to steal, to kill, to slander, to covet, to harbor a hateful thought or gaze with a lustful eye, is *lèse-majesté*. It is in the nature of rebellion, the hopeless rebellion of a man whose

breath is in his nostrils against an infinite and holy God.

And every sin is in the nature of suicide as well. Alas, the habit is on us! We are so busy sinning that we do not hear the voice of the offended law iterating and reiterating, with ever deeper emphasis, the penalty of each repeated sin, "Depart! Depart from God! Hide yourself in the night! Hide among the trees of the garden! Hide and tremble, for the Holy One comes this way!"

So runs the double tragedy of sin: Rebellion and suicide! The outlaw who, having barricaded himself among the rocks, shoots at the officers of justice until all his ammunition is exhausted but one shot, and then discharges that into his own brain, is not more really a suicide than the sinner who, defiant of all warnings and entreaties, persists in violating the Divine law.

The Second of the Tragedies in this word "Come" is *the Tragedy of the Cross;* for it would have been impossible for God to invite the sinner to return had he not thus prepared the way.

At this point we observe the vital difference between Christianity and all other religions. In point of fact, all religions may be classed under three heads: namely, Natural, Intuitional, and Revealed.

In Natural Religion there is no intimation of any possible pardon of sin. True, Nature "speaks a various language"; but in all her vocabulary there is no such word as "Come." Of the interpreters of Nature none has spoken more eloquently than Cole-

ridge, who, standing in the Vale of Chamouni, heard voices all about him:

> Ye Ice-falls! ye that from the mountain's brow
> Adown enormous ravines slope amain,
> Motionless torrents, silent cataracts;
> Who made you glorious as the gates of heaven
> Beneath the keen full moon? Who bade the sun
> Clothe you with rainbows? Who, with living flowers
> Of loveliest blue, spread garlands at your feet?
> God! Let the torrents like a shout of nations
> Answer, and let the ice-plains echo, God!
> God! Sing, ye meadow streams with gladsome voice;
> Ye pine groves, with your soft and soul-like sound;
> And they too have a voice, yon piles of snow,
> And in their perilous fall shall thunder, God!
>
> Ye living flowers that skirt the eternal frost;
> Ye wild goats sporting round the eagle's nest;
> Ye eagles, playmates of the mountain storm;
> Ye lightnings, the dread arrows of the clouds;
> Ye signs and wonders of the elements,
> Utter forth, God!

So from things created are clearly seen the invisible things of God. This is natural theology. Yet in all this there is no comfort or encouragement for the soul that has been alienated from God.

The same is true of Intuitional Religion. As the word "Come" is not heard in nature, so it is not spoken by conscience from within us. The most sympathetic advocate of the Intuitional School among the poets is Wordsworth, who, in his "Intimations of Immortality," sings thus:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar.
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.

The sense of our Divine birthright never leaves us. Man is a ruin, but a magnificent one, amid whose desolation, as in some crumbling temple, walks the soul, like a Levite stripped of his ephod and ever mourning for his lost God. But in all these intuitions and voices from within there is no answer to the question, "How can I rid myself of sin that I may return again to a holy God?"

It is left for the Gospel, the Religion of Revelation, to utter forth the invitation and cast up a highway for the homesick soul. The God of the Bible calls, "Come!" and lifting his finger points to the Tragedy of the Cross. It is here that our great questions are answered, "How can God be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly?" and, "How can a man be just with God?"

The Son of God, bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, is the personification and living articulation of the word "Come." His hands are outstretched as if to sweep away all obstacles that could prevent the sinner's return, while he says, "Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved."

As all figurative expressions of truth have their

limitations, so the Parable of the Prodigal Son, pathetically and wonderfully beautiful as it is, falls short at one point. The father stands in the doorway, looking off toward the far country, where his wayward son has gone. Night after night he has kindled the lights in his windows. His door has never been shut. He has stretched out his arms in his dreams; but he has never gone out after his wandering boy. But the heart of our Father, with its great longing after his prodigals, drove him out, as the Good Shepherd seeking the lost sheep, into the night. He braved the tempest to seek and save. This going out is the Incarnation; and the passion of Calvary is the saving of the lost. O Infinite Grace! O Divine condescension!

The Third of the Tragedies implied in the word "Come" is *the Great Refusal;* and this is a tragedy that reaches on forever. Alas for the soul which, when God calls, "Come," answers, "I will not!"

It is recorded that, while Christ was agonizing on the Cross, another tragedy was going on beneath it. The priests "derided him"; the soldiers "cast lots for his raiment"; and the people "stood beholding." Out of heaven God was calling, "Come!" and the emphasis put upon the invitation, then and there, was as if God had taken the very heart out of his bosom and given it to agony and death for them. Yet cool, indifferent or hostile, all alike were answering, "I will not!"

And this is the tragedy which is ever going on: men and women, with heedless or deliberate hands,

closing against themselves the only door that ever was opened into life. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been openly set forth crucified among you?"

One thing is clear: God is absolved. For what more could he have done for his vineyard than he has done?

To compel a man to accept the Divine invitation is, in the nature of the case, impossible. As we were created in God's likeness, in full possession of a sovereign will, he can do no more than place before us life and death, saying, "Choose ye!" And therein is the climax of this eternal tragedy, that when he has done his utmost we still can answer, "I will not!"

All has been done that omnipotent Love could do. God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all. He has offered the benefits of the Atonement on the simplest and easiest terms; namely, the mere acceptance of faith.

He has condescended to stand among us offering his priceless gift of grace, calling to passers-by, "Ho, every one that thirsteth! Come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price!"

Not only does he call upon us, but he has stooped to argue the case with us. "Come now, let us reason together," saith the Lord. It is as if he said "Sit thou there while I sit here, and let us con-

sider the question." And to all our arguments he makes one answer: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Nay, further; he warns and remonstrates: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Why will ye be stricken any more?" And again: "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked but that all should turn unto me and live. Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?"

Is more possible? Yes, behold the tears of God! "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate!"

It is clear, therefore, that, whatever comes of his overtures, God is vindicated. He has done the very utmost that Omnipotence could do: the rest is for us.

So rises the unanswerable question: "How shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?" One door of escape has been opened: what remains for those who wilfully or negligently close it? How shall they hope to return to God?

Come, then. Come as a wayward child returns to its parents' arms.

On a memorable day, long ago, I had a falling

out with a child of mine, who has been years in heaven. I think it was not wholly my fault. All day long there was a tempest in the little heart. At evening when I came home I stretched out my arms; but she would not. Her heart was sore, her eyes were red with weeping, her lips were tightly drawn. The little rebel; how I grieved for her! "Come," I said; and again stretched out my hands. Then suddenly she broke down and with a flood of tears threw herself upon my breast. Ah, "cuddle doon, my bairnie!"

And Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye become as this little child ye shall in no wise enter the Kingdom of God."

8. *PRAYER*

O thou who gavest thyself for me, help me to hide myself in thee. Be thou my Lord, my life, my sacrifice, my Saviour and my all. In the heat of the long day let me rest in thee as in the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. In my last hour let my life be hid with thee in God. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "Rock of Ages."

10. *BENEDICTION*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you. Amen.

THIRTEENTH SERVICE

The Higher Life

1. *INVOCATION*

O THOU Eternal and Ever-blessed God, giver of every good and perfect gift, grant me now a season of helpful communion with thee. Let my praise be as incense and my prayers as the morning sacrifice. If there be any difficulty in the way of my near approach to thee, be pleased to remove it; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "Love divine, all love excelling."

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Psalm 42.
Luke 24:13-31.

4. *PRAYER*

O God, thy greatness is unsearchable; and thy love, who can comprehend it? Thou art nigh unto all them that call upon thee. Let me not grope after thee, as blind men feel their way along the wall; for thou art nearer than seeing and touching, here and now. Assure me of thy pardoning and sanctifying grace. Help me to live so close to Calvary

that I shall never lose the vision of thy love; and keep me always under the open heavens, so that thy Spirit like a dove may descend upon me. I believe thou dost expect great things of me; for I am thy child, made in thy likeness, capable of thinking thy thoughts after thee. Blessed be thy Name for a divine birthright and an outlook into eternity. Help me to realize the possibilities that are in me. Now am I a child of God; but it doth not yet appear what I shall be. Save me from a low conception of life. Help me to live to-day as if I expected to live forever. Exalt my low desires, and enable me to covet earnestly the best things. Make me profitable unto thee. Send me on thine errands. Here am I, Lord: what wilt thou have me to do? The world is full of needy souls; the air is resonant with a cry for help. Help me to answer it, according to the full measure of my power. By word and example may I be ever glorifying thee. Keep all thy people busy. When they pray "Thy kingdom come," let them follow their prayer with the amen of service. When they pray "Thy will be done on earth as in heaven," let them proceed to do thy holy will. Prosper thy work in Zion to-day. Bless the ministration of thy Gospel at home and abroad. May all the reapers come in with sheaves at eventide. Save souls, O Lord! Let earth rejoice and heaven be

glad because of sinners returning from the error of their way; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "There is no Name so sweet on earth."

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

The Higher Life

"For me to live is Christ." (Phil. 1:21.)

A LETTER from an unknown friend in Manchester, England, runs as follows: *"Dear Sir:— Will you kindly permit me to ask what in your opinion is the greatest, highest, deepest spiritual theme for Christians to consider at the present time? As for myself, I very reverently take Paul's words, 'For me to live is Christ.' I should be grateful to receive an answer from you."*

In those words "For me to live is Christ" we have set before us, as this writer says, "the greatest, highest, deepest spiritual theme." I should like to unfold it; but the trouble is I can not adequately grasp it. I feel as I did once when, standing at the Giant's Causeway on the extreme coast of Ireland, I saw stretching before me the immeasurable sea. I am lost, bewildered, overwhelmed, in contemplating it.

But it opens up some questions on which we may possibly get a little light.

First, *what is Life?* What is it "to live"?

Is it simply to exist, to breathe and eat and sleep, to arise in the morning and seek the shop or office to pursue one's common tasks, then home again to eat and sleep and rise to the familiar treadmill; until one day the pulse flutters ominously, and the doctor is called in: then crape on the door, a hearse rumbling through the streets, and a new stone in the graveyard bearing the inscription "Rest in peace"? Is that all? This is the lowest, the merely physical conception of life.

The intellectual conception of life is higher. It is well to cultivate the mind, because knowledge is power. But will culture of itself avail? Up in Cambridge there is a boy of eleven who, they say, has mastered the higher mathematics. Not long ago he lectured to the Harvard Faculty on "the Fourth Dimension"—something or other of which most of us have no knowledge. The newspapers speak of him as a "megalocephalous phenomenon"; but it would be more to the purpose to be informed that he is a good boy. The fact is, intellectual culture has no influence upon the moral nature. The wisest man of his time in France was Voltaire, whose friends were fond of calling him "The Encyclopedia." He was an encyclopedia, indeed, bound in pigskin; for in many respects he was the most vicious of men. The wisest man of his time in Holland was Grotius, who had mastered so many branches of knowledge that he was called "the Learned Grotius"; yet, referring to one of his acquaintances, a mere cobbler, he said, "I would

give all my knowledge to learn John Urick's secret of life."

We turn, therefore, to the spiritual conception of life, which is the true one. Its definition is found in the words of Jesus, "This is life eternal, to know God."

We were created in the likeness of God; and our life is bound to end in failure unless it brings us into harmony with him. To use the words of Augustine, "We came forth from God; and we shall ever be homesick until we return to him." This, then, is life: to be in perfect accord with God's plans and purposes concerning us. Its best expression is in the word "godliness"; that is, God-likeness. We are alienated from God by sin; and the problem of all problems is, How to regain our lost estate and live the life which shall be pleasing to him?

The second question is, *When does this life begin?*

It begins at the instant when a man comes into vital touch with God; that is, when he cuts loose from sin. For "without holiness no man shall see God."

It is said of the prodigal who went away to the far country and wasted his substance in riotous living, that he "came to himself" at the moment when he said, "I will arise and go unto my father!" No man who is still wasting his substance in that far country has really begun to live; for sin is, in and of itself, the essence of spiritual death.

The sinner is said to be "dead in trespasses and sins."

In the poem of "The Ancient Mariner" a picture is presented of a ship manned by dead men,—a dead man at the wheel, dead men on the deck and in the shrouds, dead men everywhere. In like manner there are multitudes moving about our streets in sordid pursuits who have the semblance of life, but are spiritually dead. The possibility of life, however, is before them all. Its sole condition is that they shall return to God.

And this return is through Christ. For we know God only as manifested in Christ, his only-begotten Son. In him is life; as he said, "I am come that ye might have life and that ye might have it more abundantly." And furthermore, "I am the way: no one cometh unto the Father but by me." To accept Christ, therefore, is to come into vital touch with God. And faith is the hand stretched forth to touch him.

On one occasion Christ was asked, "How shall we work the works of God?" that is, works which shall commend us to him. His answer was, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Faith in Christ, then, is the one "good work" which brings a man into acceptance with God.

But to receive Christ by faith means to make an absolute surrender to him. It was by such a surrender that Paul entered into life. He says that, previous to his conversion, his morality had been

above reproach; "I have lived in all good conscience unto this day." But the time came when, on his way to Damascus, clothed with authority as an inquisitor for the extirpation of the Christian church, he saw at high noon a light above the brightness of the sun and heard the voice of Jesus calling him. At that instant his life and character were revolutionized. All his prejudices were dissipated, so that, seeing Christ as very God of very God, he cried, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He then began to live. He had returned to God by way of Christ. He had made the great surrender. "What things were gain to me," he says, "these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea, verily, and I count all things to be but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord; for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, which was of the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering, becoming conformed unto his death: if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead." By which resurrection he clearly means the newness of life, which is here and now.

The third question is, *What follows?* This is answered in the words, "For me to live is Christ."

There is a world of meaning in that word "is."

To undertake to analyze it would be like pulling apart a flower; one hesitates lest in the process its beauty be lost. But there are helpful suggestions in it.

To begin with, it presupposes a knowing about Christ. But how is one to learn about him? He himself tells us: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and *they are they which testify of me.*" In seeking information about Christ it is not safe to trust to hearsay, still less to form our impressions from the imperfect reflections of his life and character that are seen in those who profess to follow him. The best of Christians is only a stumbling sinner saved by grace. But the Bible speaks clearly respecting Christ; and it can be trusted, for it "was written by holy men as they were moved by the Spirit of God." If one cares to know about the higher life, therefore, let him take down his dust-covered Bible and read it. And if, putting away the hoodwink of prejudice, he will read as one searching for hidden treasure, he will surely find Christ, "chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely," walking through its pages from beginning to end.

But before one can say "For me to live is Christ," he must know him. To know him is more than to know about him. You may know all about Kaiser Wilhelm without ever having been introduced to him. To know Christ one must at least be on speaking terms with him. He solicits our friendship, as he says, "Behold, I stand at the

door and knock! If any man will open unto me, I will come in and sup with him and he with me." To let him in, and to cultivate his acquaintance while we sup together, this is to know him. Is our intimacy such that, meeting him in a strange place, we should recognize him? Do we know him so that if to-night we were called to go through the Valley of the Shadow his rod and staff would comfort us? Do we know him so that at heaven's threshold his voice calling "Enter into the joy of thy Lord" would not seem like the voice of a stranger? Do we know him so that we can confidently say, "I know him in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day"?

It means, moreover, that we believe Christ. One cannot be a Christian without receiving him as an authoritative teacher and taking him at his word. All controversies are to be settled by referring them to him. For example, the question of his Divinity must be determined by what he teaches about it; and the question as to the inspiration and entire trustworthiness of the Scriptures must be answered in the same way. No matter what preachers or theological professors say, his word is for his followers the Court of Final Appeal. All his promises are to be taken at their face value; such as "Ask, and it shall be given unto you," and "Thy sins be forgiven thee."

It means, still further, *that we are to believe in*

him. And to believe in him is immeasurably more than merely to believe him. I dare say everybody regards President Taft as a truthful man; but to believe in him means that one approves his policies and is ready to lend a helping hand to carry them out. So to believe in Christ is to assent to the proposition that he did what he came into the world to do; that is, "he bore our sins in his own body on the tree"; and going thus far we are bound, in common logic and consistency, to go farther and say, "My Lord, my Life, my Sacrifice, my Saviour, and my all!"

One thing more is contained in those words "For me to live is Christ"; namely, the handclasp. This means to enter into covenant with him.

He extends his hand, a pierced hand, to every man, and the issues of life and death are in taking or refusing it. To clasp that hand is to seal the compact of life with him. It means that I take him to be my Saviour from sin, my Exemplar of character, my Lord and Master. At this point there can be no reservation. The clasping of hands means the blending of lives; as Wesley said—

> This one thing I find,
> We two are so joined,
> He can't go to heaven
> And leave me behind.

Thenceforth Christ is, as it were, one's *alter ego.* There is an engrafting such as is set forth in the Parable of the Vine and its Branches. We catch

his Spirit, so that "the mind that was in Christ Jesus is also in us." It was thus that Luther was moved to say, "If you knock at my breast and ask 'Who lives here? Luther?' my answer is, 'No! Luther once lived here; but Christ came, and Luther moved out to make room for him. Now, I no longer live; but Christ liveth in me.'" And this is life—the life that is "hid with Christ in God."

Have I clarified the text? The mysteries here are deep beyond all sounding. Paul's plummet could not fathom them. "I count not myself to have apprehended," he said, "but this one thing I do; I reach forth." He longed for, and expected to have, an ever broader, deeper apprehension of this mystical union of the soul with Christ. As life passed on he felt like a traveler in the Alps who, climbing higher and higher, sees ever new heights before him. But he reached forth. And he gloried in the thought, One day I shall know!

In the meantime this is certain: no man can form a just conception of the Spiritual Life until he enters it. To stand without and ask an explanation is like contemplating a painted window from the open street. Get into the sanctuary if you would have its beauty break upon you! "He that doeth my will," said Jesus, "shall know the doctrine." It is as if he said, "Take my Hand, and I will lead you into life; and you shall see the mystery and the glory of it."

I do not know why my friend in Manchester did not finish the text: "For me to live is Christ—and to die is gain!"

The world is seeking gain. The people who jostle us in the street are striving for it; gain of gold, of honor, of selfish emolument. To gain a little yellow dust that shall sift through the fingers at last! These are gains that perish with the using. They end in loss. But the things that Paul counted "loss for Christ" were destined to be gain forever. For "what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and forfeit his own self"—"Or what shall be lost if, losing the whole world, he gain it?"

In the article of death, when earth's substance passes like the baseless fabric of a dream, then, says Paul, comes gain. Death itself is gain, because it introduces the soul to eternal life.

Oh, what is that? I wish I knew. How easily we say it. "Eternal Life!" But who shall define it? Who shall explain it?

Did you never look up at the stars and on through the interstellar spaces and wonder, "What is beyond?" So, dreaming dreams and seeing visions, we gaze through the promises that illumine the great mystery of death and wonder what eternal life shall be. "Now are we sons of God; but it doth not yet appear what we shall be." For "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him!"

8. *PRAYER*

I have heard thy voice, O Lord, calling me from sin to righteousness, from worldly sloth to faithful service, from the lonely bearing of burdens to the sharing of all burdens with thee. I would run to thee as little children come running to their mothers in trouble. I need thee. I have thee. In thee I am complete. Here let me rest and be thankful. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "Jesus calls us o'er the tumult."

10. *BENEDICTION*

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOURTEENTH SERVICE

The Jubilee in the Father's House

1. *INVOCATION*

O LORD, I do pray for a vision of heaven. Show me the Father's house. Let me hear the music and the merry-making there, so that I may more earnestly long and strive to enter in. I do not ask to be transported, but to be ready. Give me a foretaste of celestial joy, and help me to realize somewhat of heaven here and now; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "Nearer, my God, to thee."

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Isaiah 12.
Revelation 7: 9-17.

4. *PRAYER*

Who shall ascend unto thy holy hill, O Lord, or who shall stand in thy holy place? He that hath clean hands, a pure heart, and hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity. Alas, I am not worthy. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. The blood of Christ cleanseth

from all sin: the blood of him who is thy well-beloved Son and my well-beloved Brother. Thou hast said, "He that believeth shall be saved." Lord, I believe. Now blessed be thy Name: my sins are gone. They are blotted out; aye, sunk in the depths of an unfathomable sea. Thou wilt remember them no more against me. For this I render thanksgiving, and by thy grace I will show my gratitude in a holier and more useful life. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. If thou wouldst have me toil, I will toil more bravely; if thou wouldst have me suffer, I will suffer more patiently. Somewhere in thy vineyard thou hast a place for me; help me to find and fill it. Enable me to lend a hand in the great enterprises of thy Kingdom. Make me a missionary, at home or abroad, as to thee may seem well. If a missionary within the four walls of a sick-chamber, so be it. I promise my best endeavor wherever thou wilt have me. Give me the spirit of the Evangel. Give me a consuming passion for souls. Help me in my own house to show what great things the Lord hath done for me. Bring me not to heaven alone. Oh, that among the redeemed there may be some who shall testify that I brought them to thee. And unto thy Name, blessed Redeemer, shall be everlasting praise. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "Holy Spirit, faithful Guide!"

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

The Jubilee in the Father's House

"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." (Luke 15: 10.)

A MEETING of the Sanhedrin had recently occurred, in which there had been an earnest discussion respecting a certain Jesus, who claimed to be the Messiah.

In favor of his claim there was this to be said: *First:* He had come at the right time. It had been prophesied, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the obedience of the people be." The scepter was trembling in the feeble hands of Judah, and expectancy was in the air.

Secondly: This Jesus came from the right quarter. Bethlehem was his birthplace; and the prophecy ran, "Thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, which are little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5: 2.)

Thirdly: He was also of the proper lineage; that is, of the seed of David. One of the most familiar of the Messianic titles was "Son of David."

Fourthly: The character of the claimant was beyond reproach. His challenge was "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" And thus far it had been impossible to prove any sin in him.

Fifthly: His work was precisely such as might be expected of the Messiah. He had gone about preaching on the great problems of eternal life; and though he was but a carpenter, with no diploma from the schools, all were agreed as to the simplicity and power of his words. And along with his preaching he had wrought such miracles of healing that the people were moved to say, as with one consent, "Will Messiah, when he cometh, do greater works than these?"

On the other hand, there were, from the standpoint of the religious leaders, some insuperable objections to the acknowledgment of the Messianic claim of Jesus.

First: He was a man of the people; and his immediate body-guard, the twelve disciples, were persons of no social or ecclesiastical standing, being chosen from the working class.

Secondly: He had set himself in distinct opposition to the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish faith as they were superficially observed at the time; and he had criticised "the traditions of the elders" as a mischievous addition to the Word of God. Not only so: he had denounced the priests themselves, on more than one occasion, in most uncompromising terms; such as, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye are like unto whited

sepulchers, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." It was scarcely to be expected that the leaders whom he thus characterized would favor his claims as the long-expected Messiah.

Thirdly: and most important of all, he was "a friend of publicans and sinners." He had chosen the well-known tax collector of the toll booth at Capernaum to be one of his immediate friends and disciples. He had announced that the Jews were no longer to be the chosen people, but that the Gentiles were henceforth to be received into Divine favor on equal terms. He had made a missionary journey into Samaria among the mixed peoples. He had gone on into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon and preached to the barbarians, and had announced that the benefits of his work were for all sorts and conditions of men.

The meeting of the Sanhedrin referred to was destined to be momentous in its results. The members present were agreed that something must be done to arrest the popularity of this Jesus of Nazareth; for wherever he went the common people heard him gladly and followed him in crowds. "I have heard," said one, "that he recently dined with a publican and said, 'This day is salvation come to this house.' "—"It is reported," said another, "that he was seen recently conversing with a woman of the town at the village well of Sychar, and that at high noon!"—"I was present," said another, "when he permitted a woman of like character to

anoint his feet with precious nard; and he said to her, 'Go in peace; thy sins be forgiven thee.' " But there was one in that distinguished council who would not consent that the claims of Jesus should be repudiated without a fair hearing and due consideration. It was the learned Gamaliel, known as "the Flower of the Law." It was he perhaps who suggested that a delegation should be sent to hear and report upon the preaching of Jesus.

It was after the Feast of Dedication, and Jesus was preaching in Perea, east of the Jordan. His congregation was a singular one. "All the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto him to hear him." The delegation of the Sanhedrin stood and heard him discourse on "The Seeking God."

He told of a woman who, having lost a coin, searched in every nook and cranny until she found it, and then called together her friends and neighbors, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the lost!"—"So," said the preacher, "does the seeking God rejoice with his angels over every penitent sinner."

They heard him tell of a shepherd who went out into the mountains after a lost sheep and sought until he found it; and when he had brought it home upon his shoulders he called together his friends and neighbors, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the lost!" And this, said the preacher, is the seeking God, who rejoices with his angels over every penitent sinner.

And they heard him tell of a father, whose younger son had gone into a far country and wasted his substance in riotous living, and when the son returned in poverty and rags he was received by this father with joy, who called in his friends and neighbors, saying, "Let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again: he was lost and is found!" And this again, said the preacher, is the seeking God, who rejoices over every sinner returning from the error of his ways.

We have no means of knowing how the delegates of the Sanhedrin were impressed by this discourse. But to us it seems to throw a *wonderful light on the greatness and goodness of God.*

Let those who would know God look in at this window. It is the father of the prodigal who presides at the feast. It is he who called the guests together, saying, "Rejoice with me." If the others rejoice, he still more. This is his house, his table, his jubilee, his son welcomed back from the far country of sin.

Job saw God sitting upon the circle of the universe, calling into being the things that are out of those that were not.

Moses heard him at Sinai, speaking from the flaming mountain as the God of law and justice, who is "a consuming fire."

Isaiah had a vision of him sitting on a throne high and lifted up with the seraphim all about him calling to one another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts!"

John the Evangelist portrayed him enthroned in heaven, with a rainbow round about him "in sight like unto an emerald," lamps of fire burning before him, and an innumerable company of angels and archangels prostrating themselves in worship, saying, "Thou art worthy to receive glory and honor and power!"

But here is the picture of God as a Father, as "Our Father." How near it brings him to the children of men! He is the God of love. He is the God whose hands are stretched out. He is the seeking God, who protests, "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that all should turn unto me and live! Turn ye, turn ye: for why will ye die?" He is the God of the Gospel, who goes forth "to seek and to save." He is the God of Calvary, where his overtures of mercy are expressed in the terms, "Look unto me, and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth!"

And in this wonderful sermon in Perea, we have also a blessed side-light into *the life and character of the angels*. For at the table in the father's house, where the prodigal was welcomed, were gathered not kinsfolk only but neighbors as well.

It is little that we know of the angels; but it seems clear that they are of a different order from the children of men. We are "of one blood," but they seem to have been created one by one. The song of our childhood, "I want to be an angel, and with the angels stand," expresses an impossible wish. We can never belong to that race of sinless

beings; but we can join the ranks of the saints triumphant, who "stand nearer than they," and sing the song of Him who has "redeemed them by His blood and made them to be kings and priests unto God."

One thing is clear: the angels are deeply concerned in the welfare of this world of ours. At its creation they shouted for joy. At the Incarnation of Christ they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased." His sepulcher was encompassed by legions of them, one of whom rolled away the stone. And when he ascended from Olivet, they thronged his chariot and bore him aloft to "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was."

Nor is their interest confined to the earthly ministry of Christ. The doctrine of guardian angels is little dwelt on nowadays; but great truth and comfort are found in it. The mothers are right when they sing, "Hush, my babe: lie still and slumber, holy angels guard thy bed." The teaching of the Scriptures is clear: "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and on their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."

It was an angel that directed Hagar and her famishing child to a spring of water. It was a troop of angels that thronged the ladder which Jacob saw on the heights of Bethel. It was an angel that went before Israel in the Wilderness, to point the way. It was an angel that came to Peter in prison and broke his chains. And there is re-

joicing among the angels over all who return from sin. They sit at the great Jubilee. "The tears of penitents," says Bernard, "are the wine of angels." Here is a blessed truth, which brings heaven near to earth. "We have more servants to wait upon us," says George Herbert, "than we are willing to take notice of."

And, further, we have here an illuminating intimation as to our *kinsfolk gone before us.* The family sit at a table in the father's house.

The fact that there is no mention of any mother in the Parable of the Prodigal's Return, lends a touch of pathos to it. Perhaps she was in heaven, there praying for him. Thanks be to God for our mother's prayers! In one of our Fulton Street meetings a man arose and said, "I have been a gambler and a very wicked man; but there has not been a day for ten years that I have not known that my mother was praying for me. It is her prayers that have brought me here a penitent to-day."

Of this we may be sure. Those who have gone before us to the Father's house know what is transpiring here below. So much is made plain by the fact that Moses and Elijah, one of whom had been dead a thousand years and the other fifteen hundred, came down together to talk with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration concerning his approaching death. They not only knew each other, but they knew what was taking place in the world and were deeply concerned in it.

And, going a step farther, we may say that if

our loved ones in heaven are aware of what is going on here, they are surely praying for our salvation. In one of our familiar hymns there is a reference to the Christian's death, in which he is represented as saying, "Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer!" I do not believe that we shall ever bid farewell to prayer, except as certain of our prayers are weak and foolish and inconsistent with our Father's will. In heaven we shall be praying still for those we have left behind us. How could it be otherwise, if we remember and love them? Is it not written, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them that are heirs of salvation?" It is a blessed thought that we shall be contributing thus to the welfare of our friends and joining our supplications to those of the great Mediator who ever liveth to make intercession for us.

And what must be the rejoicing of these saints triumphant when their friends are gathered in! How the major note must ring through their songs at the Jubilee in the Father's house! And what a welcome to the saved as they come thronging through the gates!

Many of us remember when the rescued passengers of the *Republic* came in at the White Star docks. What an ovation they received! The street was thronged with people who peered into the faces of the rescued as they came down the gang-plank one by one. There was much shouting and vociferous rejoicing; but those who were most

deeply interested greeted their friends with silent joy. Happy, happy kinsfolk who thus met their loved ones!

I like to think of heaven in this way. It is not merely a place of songs and litanies. The joy of "the home-bringing" is there, "the knitting severed friendships up." It is home, sweet home.

And, further still, a wonderful light is thrown in this picture on *the heavenly felicity of sinners saved by grace.* In that Jubilee in the Father's house, who is so happy as the prodigal himself? See him at the table—who so recently sat famishing in the swine-field—clad in the best robe, with shoes on his feet and wearing the signet ring. His heart is filled with rejoicing, because the past is forgiven and a new life is before him.

In the International Salon of '62 were two pictures. One was called "Waiting for the Verdict." The scene was in court, with the prisoner standing at the bar; in the foreground a woman, in an agony of suspense, with one child sleeping on her bosom and another tugging at her dress; the grandmother near by, with a baby in her arms; a dog looking up and wondering. The other picture was entitled "The Acquittal." The same group of people were there; but the man who stood in the prisoner's dock now has his arms about his wife; the grandmother is holding up the baby to be kissed; the dog is licking his master's hands. Why this change? The man had been acquitted! All heaven is full of sin-

ners saved by grace; and every one of them has a heart throbbing with gratitude to the Saviour, who died that they might live.

I wonder if the men charged by the Sanhedrin to report upon the teaching of Jesus went back with any such picture in their minds? Did they catch a glimpse through the window into the joy of the Father's house? Did they return, like the band of officers charged with a similar errand, saying, "Never man spake like this man"? How could they or their masters resist the logic of such preaching? The charge against Jesus was that he was "a friend of publicans and sinners." Blessed be God! This is the very demonstration of his Messianic claims. And he is still the friend of publicans and sinners. He seeks that he may save. He searches on the dark mountains for the lost ones, and brings them home rejoicing. He sets the harps of heaven ringing with the music of redemption. "Another sinner saved!" Break forth into joy, O angels and saints triumphant! Give welcome to the lost that is found, to the dead that is alive again!

But if God, angels and saints triumphant are so deeply concerned in our welfare, how is it that some among us are unconcerned? Marvel of all marvels; the prodigal cares not! Let him listen until he hears the sound of music and of dancing; let the music of the Jubilee meet the longing of his hungry soul until he can tarry no longer but also be moved to say, "I, too, will arise and go."

8. *PRAYER*

I thank thee, O Lord, for prophecies of heaven's joy. And I thank thee for heavenly fruits that grow along the earthly pathway. Help me to rejoice in thee while living here below, that my voice may be attuned to celestial praise; for thy name's sake. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "I'm a pilgrim."

10. *BENEDICTION*

The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with thee. Amen.

FIFTEENTH SERVICE

The Timid Soul

1. *INVOCATION*

I LOVE thee, O Lord, because thou hast heard my voice and my supplication. Thou hast delivered mine eyes from tears, my feet from falling, and my soul from death; wherefore I call upon my soul and all that is within me to bless thy holy name. Help me now to worship thee aright and pray acceptably; in Jesus' name. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "Come, let us join our cheerful songs."

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Psalm 56.
Ephesians 6:10-18.

4. *PRAYER*

I thank thee, O Lord, for thy Sabbath. Help me to remember that thou hast hallowed it. Thou knowest how the world encroaches upon my time; wherefore thou hast set apart one day in seven for the soul. Help me, therefore, to leave the low valleys of secular care, and come up into the Mountain of the Lord to breathe the clear air with thee. Give

me a foretaste of the eternal Sabbath which thou hast prepared for thy people. Forbid that I should rest in indolence. Help me to rest, rather, in service. For there is no joy like growing weary for thee. I know that thy saying, "The Sabbath was made for man," did not mean for carnal, sordid, self-seeking man, but for one made in thy likeness and made to live forever. Help me so to improve the high privileges and opportunities of this holy-day that I may grow in spiritual stature and become a little more worthy of thy grace. Help me to search the Scriptures to-day, so that I may find hidden treasures there. Help me to observe the duty of secret prayer; and when I enter into my closet and close the door may I find thee there before me. Bless those who gather in the courts where thine honor dwelleth; and let the preaching of thy Word be followed by an ingathering of souls. Bless the missionaries of the Cross. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who bring good tidings and publish peace! Follow their message with thy benediction, O Lord; and let those who stumble in the night of paganism be inclined to run unto thee. Show forth thy salvation in all the earth. Hasten the time when the clouds of heaven shall part asunder, and thy waiting people shall cry, "The Lord cometh!" Then shalt thou have the heathen for thine inheritance

and the uttermost part of the earth for thy possession. This I ask, with all needed blessings and above all the pardon of sin; for thy worthy Name's sake. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "Jesus, and shall it ever be?"

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

The Timid Soul

"What time I am afraid I will put my trust in thee." (Psalm 56: 3.)

WHO's afraid? Not David, surely. Not the David who in his boyhood, while protecting his flock, went down into the pit on a snowy day against both lion and bear. Not the ruddy youth who, in the valley of Elah, went out against the Philistine champion with no weapon but a sling and five smooth stones from the brook. Not the famous Captain who had led the armies of Israel against the Gerzites and Geshurites and Amalekites and Jerahmeelites and Kenites and scattered them like leaves before an autumn storm. Aye, the very same! It is he who says, "What time I am afraid, I will put my trust in thee."

What had happened? What had so loosened the joints of his courage that he should make this humiliating confession? Ah, constant dropping wears away the rock. He had been hunted on the mountains so long that all courage had oozed out

of him. By nature brave as a lion, he had been outlawed and pursued until he became as timid as a fawn. The rustle of a leaf startled him; the crackling of twigs sounded like the rattle of steel against the greaves of armed men. He had been chased from Naioth to the tabernacle at Nob, where even the horns of the altar could not protect him: from Nob to Gath, in the heart of Philistia, where he had feigned insanity in vain; and from Gath to the mountains again, where, in the shelter of the cave of Adullam, he came to himself and wrote "the Golden Psalm." He had forgotten God: he now remembered him. The echoes of the lonely rocks responded to his harp, while he sang, "What time I am afraid, I will put my trust in thee!"

But "who's afraid?" This is what boys say when going through a graveyard at night or robbing an orchard: "Who's afraid?" You and I; everybody is afraid. We are only "whistling to keep our courage up." The older we grow the greater cowards we are. Experience teaches. Children thrust their fingers into the coals, but a "burned child dreads the fire." As the years pass we realize that we are compassed by dangers. There are arrows flying by day; in the darkness the pestilence walks. Wherefore fear is the universal passion. All are not afraid of the same thing. Napoleon did not shrink from the embattled front of the Allied Powers, but he trembled when obliged to sleep alone; Wellington was not

afraid of Napoleon, but he so dreaded pain that he dared not snuff a candle.

It is the things which are unseen that most affright us. A cat has no terrors for its youthful owner, until he sees its two eyes glaring at him in the dark. We live on the borders of the unseen world; and out of the invisible emerges a procession of specters that constantly appal us.

I. *There, to begin with, is the specter of God*—a false god, like Siva with a hundred hands, each holding a thunderbolt. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of such a god.

The antidote for this fear is in finding the true God; the God who is revealed in Christ as his only-begotten Son. He came into the world to tell us how to approach God with that love which casteth out fear; and he did this in the words, "When ye pray, say 'Our Father.'" It is because of our misconception of God that we flee from him, as Adam did when he heard his voice in the Garden calling "Where art thou?" To know God is life eternal; more than that, it is strength, comfort, and hope; it is all that makes life worth living. Find God, therefore; and finding, trust in him. Augustine wrote "Art thou afraid of God? Fly to his arms!"

II. *The next of the specters, emerging from the unknown, is Man.* Challenge him, like a sentinel on guard: "Who comes here—friend or foe?" It matters little, however, whether he be friend or foe. "Put not thy trust in man."

David suffered many things because of his enemies. He complained that they "compassed him about like bees." But vastly more was he troubled by the treachery of those who professed to be his friends: Saul, and Achish, and Doeg the Edomite who betrayed him at Nob, and Shimei who, having flourished on his bounty, turned upon him in adversity and threw stones from behind a wall. Little wonder that David grew bitter at the thought. On his famous saying, "I said, in my haste, all men are liars," Bishop Hall remarks, "He said this in his haste; but with larger experience he might have said it at his leisure." Alas for those who, having known the instability of friendship, have lost confidence in human nature! "The fear of man bringeth a snare." It disables us for the cheerful tasks and obligations of life.

The antidote is in finding the "Right Man." And this we do when we make the acquaintance of Christ. Luther sings—

> Did we in our own strength confide,
> Our striving would be losing;
> Were not the right man on our side,
> The man of God's own choosing,
> Dost ask who that may be?
> Christ Jesus, it is he!

He is the trustworthy friend; the friend on whom all can most safely lean. Trusting in him, we may say, "I will not fear what man can do unto me."

III. *Out of the invisible comes also the shadowy figure of the Prince of the Power of the Air.* Do

not smile at the suggestion. They are cowards who speak with levity or bravado of hell and the devil. The time comes inevitably when they shake like an aspen at the things they once laughed at.

You say you do not believe in the personality of Satan? Then you must needs take issue with the Bible; for the Bible is full of it. Read the story of the temptation of Adam, the temptation of Job, the temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness. To deny the personality of the Evil One is to set one's self against the clear teaching of Christ himself. Not only so, it is to deny the voice of personal experience. Does temptation spring up out of the ground? Is there in your case no allurement to sin?

The antidote of this fear is in knowing Christ, the Giver of all grace. He said to Peter in view of his approaching temptation: "Simon, Simon, Satan asked to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee that thy faith fail not!" To know that Christ is on my side, the interceding Christ, and to rest in the power of his intercession, is to pluck up courage which defies the Prince of the Power of the Air.

IV. *The next of the shadows issuing from the darkness is my own worst enemy, to wit, Myself.*

The severest conflict that a true man ever has is with his own worse nature. The war of all wars is the "war in my members." My meaner self, the self that clamors for the gratification of all baser passions and exults over the death of high purpose

and holy aspirations, this is the wrestler with the underhold who gives me the grapple of my life.

Paul was a brave man. As a prisoner he stood before earthly courts and courageously held his own. Mobs had no terror for him; he did not blanch in the presence of his executioner. The only man of whom Paul was afraid was Saul of Tarsus—the "old man," the carnal man, with whom he was ever at odds.

The antidote of this fear is to know Christ, the Giver of the helping hand. Self-confidence is like the paper helmet of Don Quixote, which was pierced and as often repaired with needle and thread. Resolution is a broken reed. But "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

It was self-confidence in Peter that moved him to say, "Lord, bid me come unto thee on the water." It was the disappointment that comes to all self-confident men that moved him to cry, when sinking, "Lord, save, or I perish!" It was the Hope of the World that stretched out a hand to save him. Blessed is he who has discovered the secret of conquest in this: "My grace is sufficient for thee!"

V. *The next of the specters is stern-faced Duty.*

"Go to Nineveh!" said God to Jonah; and Jonah, being afraid, fled to Tarshish from the face of God. "Go anoint Hazael to be king of Syria!" said God to Elijah; and Elijah trembled at the command and betook himself to the lonely shadow of the juniper-tree. Every hour of life has its own

injunction; and the response of the natural heart is, "Turn aside and take thine ease." Thus life ends in failure; yet there is no failure but the shirking of one's task.

The antidote of this fear is in knowing Christ as our Comrade. He never asks me to discharge a duty by myself. I do not preach alone: he stands beside me. I do not pray alone: he kneels beside me. The sum total of life's duties is comprehended in the commission at Olivet: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world!" Why should I shrink from the heaviest cross? "What time I am afraid, I will put my trust in thee."

VI. *The next of the specters is Adversity.*

We are afraid of the future, because no man knows what the morrow may bring forth. It may be a day of sorrow and disappointment. Or perhaps the shadows are already over me. I am even now walking through the Vale of Baca, crying at every step "Why?" and "Wherefore?" And there is no voice nor answer nor any that regardeth. I sit like Job among the ruins of my prosperity, fearing and trembling, not knowing how or when the next blow may fall.

The antidote is found in the acquaintance of Christ as our fellow-sufferer. He is the High-priest who can be deeply touched with a feeling of our infirmities. His gospel gives us the only explanation of the discipline of affliction. If we

suffer with him, we shall be glorified with him and reign with him.

O Merciful One!
When men are farthest, then thou art most near;
When friends pass by, my weakness shun,
Thy chariot I hear.

Thy glorious face
Is beaming towards me, and its holy light
Shines in upon my lonely dwelling-place,
And there is no more night.

On my bended knee
I recognize thy purpose, clearly shown;
My vision thou hast dimmed, that I may see
Thyself, thyself alone.

I have naught to fear;
This darkness is the shadow of thy wing;
Beneath it I am almost sacred; here
Can come no evil thing.

I seem to stand
Trembling, where foot of mortal ne'er hath been,
Wrapped in the radiance of the sinless land,
Which eye hath never seen.

VII. *Now comes the King of Terrors, riding on his pale horse, a gruesome and commanding figure among the shadows of the invisible world.*

Am I afraid? Christ himself was afraid to die. He, being bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, shrank from the purple cup that was put to his lips under the olive trees. Every nerve and sinew quivered as he cried, "O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me!" It is not to our discredit

that we also fear and tremble in the presence of the grim messenger who calls us to pass into the infinite with closed eyes.

The antidote is in the acquaintance of this Christ, who in dying plucked the sting of death. He, as our representative, overcame the fear of death in Gethsemane when he cried, "Thy will be done!" And he plucked its sting when, on the cross, he made atonement for our sins. As it is written, "The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

"And after death the Judgment." A troop of dim figures are gathering in the Valley of Decision. Just behold that number, from every graveyard! For the earth and the sea shall give up their dead; and all shall stand before the throne to be judged for the deeds done in the body:

> Great God, what do I see and hear?
> The end of things created;
> The Judge of man I see appear
> On clouds of glory seated.
> The trumpet sounds; the graves restore
> The dead which they contained before;
> Prepare, my soul, to meet him!

But why shall they be afraid of the Judgment, who have an almighty Advocate with the Father?

> Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
> My beauty are, my glorious dress;
> 'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
> With joy shall I lift up my head.

He stretches forth his wounded hands to plead my cause; he speaks the word of pardon there for me.

Christ, then, is the Antidote of every fear. His throne is at the center of that world of the unknown which so terrifies me. He is for me the "Death of death and hell's destruction." No storm shall affright me; because, as the sailor in mid ocean says, "If I sink, I can but sink into the hollow of his hand."

Here, then, is our conclusion: "Perfect love casteth out fear." We praise thee, O God. We acknowledge thee to be the Lord. O Lord, in thee have I trusted. Let me never be confounded!

His word is an arsenal of "Fear nots." He comes in the tempest, saying, "Fear not, it is I!" He comes in death, and we answer, "I will fear no evil; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." His great bequest is a promise that serves as an invulnerable defense against all arrows: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled; neither let it be afraid."

8. *PRAYER*

> In thee, O Lord, have I put my trust; of whom shall I be afraid? When I am weak, then am I strong, because thy power resteth upon me. Gird me with truth, crown me with the helmet of thy salvation, and give me the fearlessness of an unwavering faith; for Christ's sake. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve."

10. *BENEDICTION*

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SIXTEENTH SERVICE

Assurance

1. *INVOCATION*

I INVOKE thy presence, O Lord, and entreat thy blessing; for, without thee, this would be a barren hour. Show thy face and manifest thy mercy unto me. Help me to forget the world and commune with thee; for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "From every stormy wind that blows."

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

1 Kings 17:1-6.
John 10:1-33.

4. *PRAYER*

I thank thee, O God, for thy most blessed Word, wherein thou hast unveiled thyself and made known the riches of thy grace. Thou hast not left me like a shipwrecked mariner, drifting on a boundless sea. Blessed be thy Name, I have a chart and compass to sail by. Bring to naught, I pray thee, all the plans and purposes of those who would destroy the confidence of thy people in thy sacred Word. I

know it was written by holy men as they were moved by thy Spirit; for thou hast so assured me. I take it gladly, therefore, and confidently as my infallible rule of faith and practice; and by thy grace I will shape my life and character by it. I thank thee, also, for thine Incarnate Word. Help me ever to be true to Christ, who gave himself for me. May I never refuse or hesitate to follow him wherever his footsteps lead me. Give me his gentle Spirit, his patience in suffering, his courage in the presence of duty, his hatred of sin and love of righteousness, his unwearying zeal in doing good, his passion for souls. Help me to believe so confidently in his ultimate triumph that I shall count it my highest honor to have part in it. Make me a participant in the work of his Kingdom on earth. Bless all evangelistic efforts: city missions, home missions, foreign missions; Lord, bless them all. And bless the workers—those who go forth with weeping, bearing precious seed. Thou hast said they shall come again with rejoicing bringing their sheaves with them. Oh, speed the day when all heaven shall raise the song of harvest home, because the last sinner shall have been converted unto thee. Then shall the whole earth be full of thy glory as the waters cover the sea. And to thy Name, blessed Saviour, shall praise be given through all ages. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "When I survey the wondrous Cross."

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

Assurance

"I know him whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day." (2 Tim. 1:12.)

AN old man is writing to a young man. The old man, Paul, is a prisoner at Rome; the young man, Timothy, is pastor of the church at Ephesus. The old man and the young man have been friends for years. The old man's race is almost run: at any moment he may hear the footfall of the executioner in the corridor of his jail; the young man has the bright prospect of life before him. The old man has had an eventful story, "in labors more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in prisons more abundantly, in deaths oft." Yet he makes no complaint; on the contrary, in this letter he strikes the major chord. He affirms that he has no doubt as to the credentials of his faith. "I know" is his word; and blessed is the man who can echo it! He says he is "not ashamed of the Gospel." By all the analogies of human experience he should have been ashamed of it; for the Gospel was in the pillory. The Jews hated it and the Greeks reviled it; but what cared Paul? He knew that it was "the power

of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." And he says, furthermore, that, though compassed about by dangers, he is without fear, because the Lord is in covenant to "deliver him from every evil work." Not in doubt, not ashamed and not afraid! Loud boasting this; but Paul gives his reasons. Here they are: "I know him whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day."

The secret of Assurance is in these words.

If a man goes up a mile in an airship, everybody says, "That machine is worth looking into." But here we have a compendium of truth by which Paul was enabled to soar aloft and breathe the clear atmosphere of heaven for a lifetime! This surely will repay examination. Let us proceed, therefore, to take it apart:

The first thing we come upon is a singular word, *paratheke.* It requires seven words to translate it into English; "that which I have committed unto him": literally, *a trust or deposit.*

But what is this deposit which Paul has "committed unto Christ"? Is he referring to his soul? Not if we are to understand by the soul a detachable something or other which a man carries about him. To say that a man "has a soul" is the pagan way of putting it. The Persians thought of man as a dual personality. On one of their ancient monuments is an image of Darius with a dim, winged figure hovering over him. This is Darius

and his soul, or *fravashi,* as they called it. All that Darius needed was to commit his soul to Ormuzd, and having thus secured its eternal welfare, he, the other Darius, could live on and reign as he pleased here below.

The same philosophy is prevalent in some quarters in our time; the soul being regarded as a sort of "astral personality," which subsists in a man and goes on living after he himself is dead.

But this is not the philosophy of Christ. He never taught about the soul or thought of it in that way. His great saying, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" is rendered in the Revised Version, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his life?" And this is as it should be; for Christ regarded a man as an immortal unit.

And so did Paul. The deposit, or *parathéke* of which he speaks, is the sum total of all that constitutes "life." It includes time and talents, influence, character, knowledge, possessions, privileges, destiny, everything that enters into the sum of life. This is what is meant by the deposit; the aggregate of all things that make *me.*

The second thought which is made prominent in the text is that *this deposit is in danger.*

Paul thinks of himself as a man going through a dangerous country beset by enemies on every hand. The question is, how to safeguard himself until he reaches his destination; and his destination is indicated in the phrase "that day."

We are all, in like manner, journeying through the Land of Sin. We are waylaid by temptation on every side. What does the adversary want? My soul? No: he wants *me.*

In 1846 a Polish patriot, named Piotrowski, made his escape from Siberia, where he had been for years a prisoner in chains. He had been apprised of the fact that France was in sympathy with Poland; and he knew that if he could present his case in the Corps Législatif, which was in session at Paris, he would be vindicated. On making his escape he betook himself to the Ural Mountains, where for a weary year he endured cold, hunger and all manner of hardships; but, pushing on through frontier towns and outposts, hiding, fleeing, pursued by men and beasts, he reached Paris at last and was free.

So says Paul, "In journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in labor and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness; troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;" I go pressing on, ever pressing on in the hope of reaching the great Assize and standing before the just Judge in that day.

The third thought of our text is that Paul's Assurance was due to the fact that *he had entrusted*

himself to One who was competent to take care of him.

It is the height of folly for any man to assume that he can be his own caretaker in the journey of life; for we are confronted by real and formidable perils at every step. Would one dare to go alone through Asia Minor in times when the foundations of government are broken up? Unless he were foolhardy to the last degree, he would engage a dragoman with an escort sufficient to protect and defend him.

But where shall we find one thus competent to guide us? The journey leads through the Future, which is an unknown country. The guide who leads us safely through that country must have been there before, and must know the way. Where shall we find him?

God alone knows the future. He has traversed the future as he has the past. And Christ is God; bowing the heavens to come down that he may adjust his power and wisdom to our needs, he more than all sages and philosophers knows the way through the perils and vicissitudes of the future, even unto "that day." The part of prudence, therefore, is to entrust our deposit to this Caretaker. He makes no mistakes; he leads no man in devious ways.

This was the case with Paul. He had gone about in an unsettled way for years. He began by being his own caretaker—self-willed, self-confident and self-righteous. On discovering the folly of

his course, he turned his deposit over to the Jewish church, and thenceforth that church was his caretaker. As a ceremonialist he served his church in all good conscience, insomuch that it lavished its honors upon him. His name was in the roster of its worthies; and he rested in the confidence of his church membership until he was thirty-one years of age.

Then came the sunburst of divine light on the highway to Damascus; and Paul's life was revolutionized. He met Christ on that memorable day and made his acquaintance, so that he could say, "I know him." He had known about him before that; had known about his singular birth, his preaching, miracles, wonderful death and alleged resurrection; but he had never really known him. Now he met him face to face, made his acquaintance and straightway passed under his teaching. He was no more his own man; he was Paul the Christian—Jesus Christ's man.

The great surrender occurred at the instant when he said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The surrender was absolute, unreserved. His deposit, thenceforth, was in the keeping of Christ. He was prepared to say, "I am not my own; I am bought with a price, not of silver and gold, but the precious blood of Jesus as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." And looking inward he could say, "I no longer live, but Christ liveth in me!"

In one of the Greek poets it is related that two

devoted friends visited the shop of Vulcan, and desired to be joined in a closer and indissoluble union. He took out their hearts accordingly, laid them on his anvil and welded them into one. This is what happened to Paul when he met Christ on the highway. His union with Christ was thenceforth so perfect that nothing could interrupt it.

What was the result?

First, Assurance as to *the great verities that center in Christ.*

His doubts were dissipated into thin air; since to say, "I know him," is equivalent to saying, "I have knowledge of the things that center in and revolve about him." To him the word of the Master was the last word respecting the problems of eternal life. He no longer said, "I think thus and so"; but, "I know this, because Christ declares it." He no longer said, "In my opinion this is right and that is wrong"; but, "I know that this is right and that is wrong, because Christ so says." He no longer paused in perplexity at the cross roads of truth and conduct, because the word of Christ was like an index finger pointing the way.

And, secondly: As the result of this absolute surrender to Christ he had definite assurance of *salvation through him.* His words, "I am persuaded," mean that he had discussed the problem of destiny *pro* and *contra,* and had finally settled it. He had placed his deposit once for all in the safekeeping of Christ, and it was secure. He could not worry; he could only rest. He had found peace in believing;

the peace that Christ would fain bestow on all his followers in the terms of his last bequest: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you: let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." His consciousness of oneness with Christ was such that he could say, as Wesley sang—

> This one thing I find,
> We two are so joined,
> He can't go to heaven
> And leave me behind.

Why should he be afraid? Afraid of what? Of life, with its vicissitudes? Pain, sorrow, disappointment, were an essential part of his Master's plan—the Master who knows all, controls all, and makes no mistakes. "I reckon," says Paul, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in me." Shall he be afraid of death, then? No, death will be the good angel sent to summon him to the higher life and promote him to nobler tasks. Or shall he be afraid of the Judgment? On the contrary, he looks forward to "that day" as the very goal and consummation of his hopes. For his Lord, with whom his destinies are indissolubly bound, will sit upon the Throne of Judgment "in that day."

A chaplain asked of a dying soldier, "What is your persuasion?" He wished to know whether the man was a Christian and a church-member; and, if so, to what denomination he belonged. The

soldier answered, "My persuasion is that of Paul; 'I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord!' "

Oh, blessed Assurance of faith! This was what sustained Paul during the many sore trials of his eventful life, and enabled him to say in its closing scene, "I am now ready to be offered; for the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me *at that day!*"

Would you, my friend, have such a crown? Why not? The way is plain. Get into personal friendship with Christ. Make his acquaintance so that you also can say, "I know him." Knowing about him will not answer. Come into "the secret place of his tabernacle" and commune with him face to face. Look at him until "the eye affecteth the heart." Be in such accord with his plans and purposes concerning you that you can respond to these words, written by a Hindu convert:

In the secret of his presence how my soul delights to hide!
Oh, how precious are the lessons which I learn at Jesus' side!
Earthly cares can never vex me, neither trials lay me low;
For when evil comes to vex me, to the secret place I go.

Would you like to know the sweetness of the secret of the Lord?
Go and hide beneath his shadow; this shall be your sure reward.
And whene'er you leave the silence of that happy meeting-place,
You must mind and bear the image of the Master in your face.

To know Christ is to love him; and to love him is to believe in him; and confidence is the secret of Assurance, for "perfect love casteth out fear"; and this is faith; and "faith is the victory that overcometh the world!"

This is Life Eternal, to *know Him*.

8. *PRAYER*

O Lord, I know that I am not saved for any worth or worthiness in me. I am helpless, but thou art mighty to save. Enable me to rest in thee. Why should I worry when I am held in everlasting arms? Why should I doubt when thy word of promise is Yea and Amen? Lord, I believe: I can do no more. Help me to take thee at thy word and cast misgiving to the winds. Send me about my work and keep me faithful unto death. Then, when I behold thy face in peace, thou shalt have the praise of my salvation forever. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "Saviour more than life to me."

10. *BENEDICTION*

The Lord bless thee and keep thee: the Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace.

SEVENTEENTH SERVICE

The Witch of Endor

1. *INVOCATION*

O LORD, make this unto me a profitable hour. I have an appointment with thee. When thou saidst, "Seek ye my face," my soul answered, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." I do not ask for thy presence, because I know thou art here before me; but I ask for a revelation of thyself in the power of thy grace. Commune with me, and enable me to take hold upon thy strength; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!"

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

1 Samuel 28: 1-20.
2 Thessalonians 2.

4. *PRAYER*

My blessed Lord and Master, help me to remember thy word, "Watch and pray"; for I am compassed about by temptations. Enable me to overcome the Evil One, and particularly when he approaches me in the guise of an angel of light. Save me from self-reliance;

incline me to lean hard on thee. Thou knowest how the Adversary, who said to our first parents, "Yea, hath God said?" is continually misleading thy people in the same way. Thou only canst keep them faithful to the truth as revealed in thy holy Word. Thou knowest how the Divine claims of thine only-begotten Son are speciously denied, even by some who profess his Name. Let their teaching be as water poured upon the ground, which can not be gathered up. Suffer not thy people to be led astray by it. Exalt the truth as it is in Jesus, and incline the whole sin-stricken world to receive it. For there is none other name given under heaven or among men whereby they can be saved. Thou hast cast up an highway to heaven, so plain that the simplest wayfarer need not err therein. All praise to thee, gracious God, for the Royal Way of the Cross! And blessed be thy Name for the broad invitation, "Whosoever will, let him come." Oh, may many sinners turn from the error of their way! And let thy saints, who assemble in thy courts to-day, be edified by thy Word. Kindle a flame of sacred zeal in all cold hearts. Turn thou again our captivity, that multitudes of those whose harps are now hung upon the willows of Babylon may return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. And to the only wise God, our Saviour, shall be glory

and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "I heard the voice of Jesus say."

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

The Witch of Endor

> "And Saul said unto his servants, 'Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her and inquire of her.' And his servants said to him, 'Behold, there is a woman that has a familiar spirit at Endor.' And Saul disguised himself and put on other raiment, and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night." (1 Sam. 28: 7.)

WHO was this that wanted his fortune told? A man divinely called and chosen to a throne, who, trifling with opportunity, had thrown away his crown and scepter.

It is recorded of him that he was "a choice young man and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he." He was crowned at Mizpah with universal shoutings of "God save the king!" He began his reign under a rainbow-arch of promise. For a while he did splendidly. On the throne he was every inch a king. In battle he was as brave as a lion. But little by little he gave himself over to self-will, until all glory departed from him. Self-will was his besetting sin. He blazed his own path to ruin. No man can, with impunity, cross purposes with God.

In all this, as Saul himself confessed, he "played the fool." But the discovery came too late. He had presumed too far upon the patience of God. There were no more counseling voices; the lights had gone out. The affairs of the kingdom were hastening to a crisis. Saul was burdened with a foreboding of disaster. He was afraid, and "his heart greatly trembled." He inquired of the Lord, but "the Lord answered him not." He must have counsel from some quarter. The Philistines were gathering at Esdraelon in the north. The king was at his wit's end. It was at this juncture that he was advised of "a woman with a familiar spirit at Endor." And here is Saul the mighty, disguised under cover of the night, at the witch's cave, with the pall of a hopeless doom gathering about him!

All this happened three thousand years ago. True; but history repeats itself. It is no difficult matter to bring the incident up to date; for there are witches still, and there is no lack of foolish folk to consult them. The caves of fraud and falsehood are everywhere about us, where foul witches await the crossing of their palms to tell the fortunes of the credulous. "Come in and see your future in the rock crystal! Come and you shall hear something better than your religion!" Aye, many are the caves of witchcraft; and many there be that go in thereat. "They seek unto wizards that peep and mutter," and among them are not a few who once frequented the house of God.

In my early life I had a friend who professed to be a follower of Christ, but, posing as a liberal, was overfond of taking issue with the truth. He set out for Endor about thirty years ago. The first cave he visited was that of Spiritualism; then he became a Theosophist; after that an Occultist or Esoteric Buddhist; then he paused a while at the cave of Christian Science; then he fell in with New Thought and subsequently with Pragmatism; and on my inquiring recently as to what particular phase of unbelief he was now entertaining, the answer was, "I believe he calls himself an Agnostic"—which means, I suppose, that he knows nothing and is proud of it.

There are many passing through a like experience in these days; people who were once in covenant with Christ but, forsaking the Gospel, have drifted into all sorts of crooked systems. It is singular how almost any form of superstition will answer for those who have swung off from the periphery of Christian faith; any so-called philosophy, delusion or hallucination, exploded heresy, absurd and preposterous mummery, puerility or bedlamite conceit. Almost anything will do. Think of substituting the puerilities of the grotesque volume called "Science and Health" for the verities of Holy Writ; or the drivel of a spiritualistic medium for the wise and divine teachings of Christ! When the sunlight goes, all hail to moonshine! Anything but the Gospel, anything but the Bible, anything but Christ!

I. *How shall we account for it?* The steps downward are not difficult to trace.

The descent begins, usually, with neglect of the Bible. As Christians we take the Bible to be our infallible rule of faith and practice; but the air is vibrant with hostile criticism; perhaps no more than ever, for there never has been a time when the world was willing to believe the Word of God. But Christians are less averse in these days to the reading of infidel books and literature. Not a few are "taken up in the lips of talkers"; and when faith in the Scriptures is lost, they have nothing to live by. What would be expected of a skipper who undertook to sail his ship without consulting his chart and compass? He would be certain to drift out of his course; and then not even his best dead-reckoning could help him.

Another cause for this moral declension is neglect of prayer. "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath, the Christian's native air." The Lord's injunction "Enter into thy closet and shut to the door and commune with thy Father," can not be ignored with impunity. A native convert in India came to his missionary with a quaint complaint that "the happy had gone out of his heart." The missionary said, "I can tell you the reason: I recently passed by the place in the forest where you used to go alone for prayer; the pathway was overgrown with grass." No pressure of time, no dullness of soul or indifference of mood can excuse the neglect of the trysting-place.

The movement on the down grade is further accelerated by neglect of church privileges. The bell that rings "Come! Come! Come and worship God; neglect not the assembling of yourselves together!" has all the emphasis of an ethical imperative. He who allows it to pass unheeded, and thus forms the non-church-going habit, withdraws from the circle of Christian fellowship. The Church is not a perfect institution, but it is what it is by the grace of God. Whatever criticism may be justly passed upon it, the fact remains that the Church is the Bride of Christ; and he can not look with complacency on one who puts a wilful slight upon it.

An additional cause of the spiritual decadence referred to is neglect of known duty and indulgence in known sin. The vital bond between the Christian and his Lord is obedience. One sin weakens it; persistence in sin severs it. A sinful habit "short-circuits" the power of the soul. A first indulgence wounds the conscience; the second does not cut so deep; the twentieth falls painlessly as on a surface seared with a hot iron. The blacksmith's apprentice at first shrinks from every flying spark, but, having become "seasoned," he is quite indifferent to a shower of sparks. Here lies the danger of habitual sin. It is committed without scruple or compunction; and the ill-doer, dreaming in the face of danger, smiles at the little discomfort it gives him.

II. *What is the result?* The Lord has clearly

spoken: "If ye seek him he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you."

The best friend the truth-seeker has is the Spirit of God, who leads the willing soul in the pathway of life. But "the Spirit shall not always strive with men." If there be resistance again and again the Spirit will sadly take its departure. There is unspeakable pathos in the injunction, "Grieve not the Spirit." The picture is that of a loving father, moved to sorrow by the obduracy of a wayward child. When the Spirit says Farewell, all open vision ceases and the lights go out.

The soul is then confirmed in unbelief.

In the Thessalonian Church there were certain persons carried away by "the deceivableness of unrighteousness," who were admonished that "God would send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie." It is not impossible that some of those who are fond of calling themselves doubters have already reached that dreary lowland of unbelief.

Doubt is humble and agonizes for the light; unbelief is boastful, and wears its rejection of truth like a feather in its hat.

You think you doubt the personality of God: are you quite sure that you do not wholly reject it? You think you doubt the divinity of Christ: are you certain that, deep down in your heart, you have not utterly renounced it? You are wont to say that you question the inspiration and trustworthiness of Scripture: ask yourself

whether you do not mean that you unequivocally deny it.

No doubt everybody has a mortal dread of hydrophobia—that fearful malady, in which the patient longs for water with a thirst unspeakable, and yet, when water is placed before him, revolts and barks at it. There is a corresponding malady in the province of religious thought, to wit, *biblio-phobia*—in which the sufferer knows his exigent need of spiritual and eternal truth, and yet, when God's Revelation of that truth is opened before him, not only refuses but disdains and flouts it.

And along with unbelief comes worldliness. When confidence in God and the great verities that center in him are lost, what remains but to live within the narrow circumscription of the physical senses? If the Epicurean philosophy be true, why is not the Epicurean life the right one? "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!" The place for Samson when his locks are shorn and his eyes are destroyed, is in Dagon's gateway; there let him sit grinding at the mill.

And worldliness at the bottom means worthlessness. The value of a man's life is measured by the place that he fills in God's universal plan. God's reapers are on the way to his yellow fields with sickle in hand; but the soul of the lapsed believer, idle in the market-place, has neither part nor lot in it.

And this means unhappiness. There is no peace for the man who is thus self-exiled from the spirit-

ual life. His way is hard. The memories of the past are bitter; the future is dark as an Egyptian night.

> Great God, I'd rather be
> A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
> So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
> Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
> Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
> Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn!

III. *What is the remedy?*

Get back to the Bible. Take down the dusty and forgotten book and open it. You have, perhaps, been studying too long about it, under the impression that you were studying it. Open and search it. See if there is not something here which the good God would reveal to you. "Search the Scriptures," said Jesus, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they which testify of me."

And return to your trysting-place. Enter into the closet and shut the door and commune with God. And, finding yourself there, for your soul's sake do not say your prayers. Pray! If you have anything to ask of God, ask it. If you have any complaint to make against him, make it. "Bring forth your strong arguments." Have it out with him. Your extremity is his opportunity. When sailors, being at their wit's end, cry unto the Lord in their trouble, he maketh the storm a calm and bringeth them to their desired haven. (Read Psalm 107: 23-31.)

And then get back to the Church. You have been accustomed to say, perhaps, that there are "as good men outside of the Church as there are in it." You are quite right. There are *better* men outside of the Church than there are in it. In point of fact, all the good men are outside of the Church. And the reason is plain. The Church is not for good people but for such as, realizing their sinfulness, *want* to be good and band themselves together for mutual support to that end. All true Church-members are sinners, sinners saved by grace. If you are strong enough to stand alone in your self-righteousness the Church is not intended for you; but if you feel your unworthiness and your need of co-operative help and sympathy, then the Church is just the place for you.

But above everything else get back to Christ. Not to any of the human Christs who have, in these last times, been conjured up out of the imaginations of men; but to the only historic Christ, namely, the Christ of the Bible. "There is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." And, once in his presence, renew your covenant with him. Let there be no reservation. He makes no terms but unconditional surrender. "Now to be thine, yea, thine alone, O Lamb of God, I come!"

And then get busy. For "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." Believe what the Master says, and moment by moment do what he bids you do. Follow the watchword of the Chris-

tian life: "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

If you are disposed thus to return to your first love, be of good courage. Your case is a hopeful one. The "grieving" of the Spirit is not final; for great are his compassions; but when the Spirit is "quenched," there is an end of hope; the last spark is out!

On the heights of Gilboa stood the recreant king amid a shower of arrows, despair in his heart and desperation on his face. His three sons and his armor-bearer lay dead at his feet; his shield had been vilely cast away. Leaning heavily upon his sword, dying of a self-inflicted wound, he reeled and fell. "How are the mighty fallen!" The next morning his headless body was impaled against the wall of Bethshan. On the stone above it write his epitaph: "Here lies one who was called to reign, but who died of having his own way."

For the soul that is moved to repentance, it is never too late to mend. In a notable exhibit at the Luxembourg, not long ago, there was a picture that attracted great attention. It was called "Too Late." The prodigal in rags and tatters having returned to his home, knelt in an attitude of hopeless anguish by the side of the bed whereon his father lay dead, with the candles about him. Too late! Too late!

This is not true. The prodigal may die, but his Father never. He waits with outstretched hands and gazes into the distance watching for the return

of his wayward son from the far country. "And when he was yet a great way off (now God be praised for the infinite hope in the closing words of the great parable of grace!) his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him."

Thus saith the Lord, "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins; return unto me, for I have redeemed thee!"

8. *PRAYER*

O God, save me from wandering in by-and-forbidden paths. I have Christ as my Guide; help me to follow him. I have the Bible as my infallible rule of faith and practice; help me to believe its teachings and translate them into life and character. Thou art my safeguard. Stay by me every hour of every day, O Lord; for I can not go wrong in thy company. And save me, finally, with an abundant and everlasting salvation, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "Jesus, keep me near the Cross!"

10. *BENEDICTION*

Now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will,

working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

EIGHTEENTH SERVICE

The Golden Altar

1. *INVOCATION*

O God, I confess my inability to seek thee aright. Come out, while I am yet a great way off, and meet me. Enable me, through Christ, to confide in thy truth and wisdom, in thine almighty power and immeasurable Love. Bow thy heavens and come down to me; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "The morning light is breaking."

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Leviticus 10:1-7.
Hebrews 9:1-5, 24-28.

4. *PRAYER*

I thank thee, Lord, for all the blessings of thy Providence; for life and daily bread, for refreshing sleep, for the light of the sun, for this world's good, and all the happiness thou hast given me. I thank thee for the blessings of thy Grace; for the Gospel of thy dear Son, and for leading me to accept it; for the Bible and the Sabbath, for the privilege of worship, and the opportunity of serving thee. Thou hast crowned my life with thy loving-kindness. If ever I have complained of pain or sickness,

or of any chastening, forgive thou me. Grant me a grateful heart and sympathy with all who suffer in mind, body, or estate. Let thy mercy rest on all who call upon thee, and be pleased to draw near unto those who know thee not. Send thy grace to those who have the Gospel and heed it not. Send thy Gospel to those who dwell in pagan darkness. O Bridegroom of the Church, awake thy sleeping bride, that she may shake herself from the dust and put on her garments of salvation. Send reapers into the field, which is already white unto the harvest. Suffer not souls to perish because of the indifference of those who profess to love and serve thee. Send me to my place of usefulness to-day. If I have ten talents, show me how to use them; if I have only one, forbid that I should bury it. Use me and glorify thyself in me; for thy Name's sake. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "Lord, I hear of showers of blessing!"
6. *OFFERING*
7. *THE SERMON*

The Golden Altar

"And he [the high-priest] shall take a censer full of coals of fire from off the altar before Jehovah, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil. . . . And he shall take of the blood of the bullock and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy-seat." (Levit. 16: 12-14.)

"But Christ having come, a high-priest of good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet by the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." (Heb. 9: 11, 12, 24.)

I SUPPOSE we have all begun the day with prayer. If we are Christians we have done so as a matter of course, for

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air.

Those who are not Christians should also, as a matter of course, have begun the day with prayer. For prayer is natural; and, by the same token, its omission is a sin against nature.

In an ancient picture of the Nativity, the sheep and cattle are represented on their knees; but that is abnormal. The vital point of differentiation between man and the lower orders of life is just there: they can not pray, but he can. He can, as Kepler said, "think God's thoughts after him." The question that Jesus asked of the Pharisees, "How much is a man better than a sheep?" is echoed by Tennyson in his Idylls of the King:

For what are men better than sheep or goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friends?
For so the whole round world is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

In the elaborate ritual of the Old Economy, in which all rites and symbols were intended to point forward to the Gospel, there were two altars, representing the two racial instincts that find expression in the questions, "What shall I do to be saved?" and " How shall I draw nigh to God?" One of these was the Brazen Altar of sacrifice, which was a silhouette of the Cross; and the other was the Golden Altar of incense, which was a picturesque setting forth of prayer. And there was a vital relation between them.

On the great Day of Atonement, which is still observed among the Jews as "Yom Kippur," the high-priest began the ceremonial at the Brazen Altar. In one hand he held a brasier full of incense, which he kindled with coals from the altar; then, dipping his hands in the blood of the sacrifice, he made his way to the entrance of the tabernacle, passed within the curtain, sprinkled the blood upon the Golden Altar, swung the burning brasier until the holy place was filled with a cloud of incense, and thus made his plea for the pardoning of the people's sins.

In this we have a picturesque setting forth of the Philosophy of Prayer. Let us observe the incense, the fire and the blood, as representing its three essential factors:

I. *The Incense gives us the Definition of Prayer.*

This incense was held to be of such importance that it had to be compounded under a divine for-

mula. It could be used nowhere but on the Golden Altar, and to counterfeit it was death. The formula was as follows: "Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; sweet spices with pure frankincense; of each shall there be like weight; and thou shalt make it incense, a perfume, after the art of the perfumer, seasoned with salt, together, pure and holy." (Exod. 30: 34.)

In like manner an acceptable prayer has three constituent factors.

The first is Peace with God. Sin is enmity against God, and the sinner is a rebel against divine law. It is obvious that before a man can come acceptably to the mercy-seat he must repent of his sins and cease fighting against God. The way is clearly pointed out in the Gospel—which is called the Gospel of Reconciliation because it is, as it were, a flag or truce sent out from the throne of God.

The second is Humility. A petition sent to the House of Lords, bearing the signatures of many honorable citizens of the British Empire, was rejected because of the omission of a single word. It should have begun "We humbly beg, etc.," but the word "humbly" was left out. The man who approaches the King of kings with no humility in his petition is merely beating the air. God is the Infinite; while, as for us, our breath is in our nostrils. *"Procul! Procul! Abeste profani!"* was the inscription over the ancient shrines: "Draw not near, ye irreverent ones!" Who are we that we

should presume to approach God? It is recorded that, when he appeared in the midst of the burning bush, Moses said: "I will turn aside and see this great sight; why the bush burneth and is not consumed," and God called to him, saying: "Draw not nigh hither! Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the ground whereon thou standest is holy ground!" And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

The third is Faith. For "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." In other words, the petitioner must be confidently persuaded of two things: that God really is, and that he is the hearer and answerer of prayer.

It is around these very points that the controversy rages most fiercely in these days. The question is whether the Law is greater than the Law-giver, or *vice versa*. If it be true that the world is governed by automatic and insensate Law, then the words of Strauss the rationalist are a reasonable inference: "In the enormous machine of the universe, amid the incessant whirl and hiss of its jagged wheels and the deafening crash of ponderous stamps and hammers, I find myself a helpless and defenseless man, not sure for a moment that a wheel may not seize and rend me or a hammer crush me into powder; and this sense of abandonment is something awful!" But if, on the other hand, the Law-giver is above the Law, then there is hope for us.

Not long ago, there was a fire in an East Side tenement and the way of escape for those on the upper floors was cut off. At one of the windows a mother appeared with a child in her arms, calling for help. But the ladders would not reach. In utter self-forgetfulness (Oh, wonderful mother-love!) she cried, "Save my baby!" Her only hope was to toss the child out of the window; and that meant simply to commit it to the cold mercies of the law of gravity, which was certain death. The fire-chief heard the mother's cry; bade his men spread the life-blanket, and then called to the mother to let the child fall. The law of gravity was interrupted then and there, and the child was saved. Is it to be supposed that God can not, if need be, arrest the operation of his laws in the same way? Is not the law of an engine interrupted, when the engineer in an emergency lays his hand upon the lever and reverses its wheels? Is not the law of disease interrupted, when the physician administers a remedy that heals his patient? Is not the law of a chronometer interrupted, when the hands are turned back to regulate it? Is God, then, the only rational being in the universe who can not interrupt the operation of a law? The suggestion is grotesque—simply preposterous! He hears and can answer when his children cry unto him.

So much for the Definition of Prayer.

II. *The Fire on the Golden Altar points out the Rationale of Prayer.*

It does this by showing us the vital connection between the two altars. As the incense was kindled by coals from the altar of sacrifice, so are we to find the rational basis of prayer in the Atonement wrought on Calvary by the only-begotten Son of God.

He came into the world to show us the way to return to our Father. His words are plain. "I am the way, the truth, and the light. No man cometh unto the Father but by me." Therefore no cross, no prayer; no atonement, no reconciliation with God. It is because of the passion of Christ that we are enabled to follow his injunction: "When ye pray, say 'Our Father.' " For only those who are willing to be reconciled can draw near to God.

Christ came not only to show us, but to open the way for us. At the moment when, having accomplished his great sacrifice, he cried, "It is finished!" the veil of the Temple was rent in sunder from the top to the bottom, as if by an unseen hand. Wherefore it is written, "We have boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil that is to say, his flesh; and having a high-priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

Not only so; but, having shown the way back to God, and having opened it by his vicarious death, he has given us a passport at the entering of the veil, to wit: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name that will I do, that the Father may be glori-

fied in the Son." And again, "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." And again, "I have chosen you, that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name he may give it to you." And again, "Verily, verily, I say unto you; whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." Observe the great words here, "anything" and "whatsoever." Oh boundless promise! It is as if a draft were drawn on the Divine exchequer, in blank, to be filled out by the receiver, indorsed in full by the omnipotent Son of God!

So much for the Rationale of Prayer.

III. *In the Blood, which was carried from the Brazen Altar to be sprinkled upon the Golden Altar, we have the Assurance of Prayer.* It is like the red arrow which Great Britain uses as the seal of its authority. If our prayers are answered, it is because the Blood says that it shall be so.

For when Jesus went away from the world he passed through the veil into the Holy of Holies, where he "ever liveth to make intercession for us." It is written that "God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us; which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast, and entering into that which is within the veil, whither as a forerunner Jesus entered for us, hav-

ing become a high-priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." (Heb. 6:17-20.) We lean upon the intercession of the High Priest who thus pleads for us at the throne of heavenly grace.

In one of the visions of the Apocalypse we have the scene portrayed: "And I beheld and lo! in the midst of the throne stood a Lamb as it had been slain. And the four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." The essential God does not appear, because He is not visible to mortal eyes; but the Son of God, "a Lamb as it had been slain," bearing still the marks of his earthly passion, stands at the right hand of His majesty; and the prayers of saints, ascending through him, give a sweet-smelling savor unto God: wherefore,

Arise my soul, arise,
 Shake off thy guilty fears;
The bleeding sacrifice
 In my behalf appears!
Before the throne my Surety stands,
My name is written on his hands.
He ever lives above
 For me to intercede;
His all redeeming love,
 His precious blood to plead.
His blood atoned for all our race,
And sprinkles now the throne of grace.
The Father hears him pray,
 His dear anointed One,
He can not turn away
 The presence of his Son;
His Spirit answers to the blood
And tells me I am born of God!

This intercession of Christ was anticipated once in his earthly ministry. In the sacerdotal prayer which followed his last interview with his disciples in the upper room, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour is come. Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify thee; as thou hast given him power over all flesh that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. I pray for them; I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. Father, I will that they, also, whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold thy glory which thou hast given me." What words are these? "Father, I will!" On the lips of any mortal petitioner this would have been presumption immeasurable. "Father, I will!" As if his word were law! It is thus that he intercedes in heaven; so that whatsoever he asks, as an echo of our asking in his name, that shall be done unto us.

And we are realizing the results of his intercession in the answers that are granted us. Now and then an unbeliever, who has no experience in these premises, starts up to suggest a "prayer test." A universal prayer test has been going on since the beginning of time. A great multitude have gone, staggering under their burdens, to the trysting-place at the Golden Altar, and have come forth light hearted, saying, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard and saved him out of all his

trouble!" Who shall presume to impeach their testimony? There are millions, yea hundreds of millions, of them, all certifying to the fact that they prayed and God heard them.

The world is full of people who have seen the sun rise; but here are a hundred inmates of a blind asylum who have never seen it. Shall they presume to cavil at the testimony of those who have? We know whereof we speak. "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, declare we unto you."

What then? Pray on! The promises of prayer are like the bells on Aaron's robe when he ministered at the Golden Altar, which gave the attending Levites to understand that he was there making his plea before God. So, from the high place where our mighty Intercessor makes his prayers in our behalf, come the great promises, such as, "Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." To your knees, O followers of Christ! Pray on, and pray believing! He is the hearer and answerer. Pray on! Pray on!

8. *PRAYER*

> O blessed Lord, who ever liveth to make intercession for thy people, help me henceforth to offer the prayer of faith. For when my poor prayers are reinforced with thine, I know they must prevail with God. Without

thee I am nothing; wherefore, Lord, leave me not to myself nor forsake me. Abide with me until I behold thy face; and thou shalt have the praise of my salvation world without end. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "Sweet hour of prayer."

10. *BENEDICTION*

The blessing of God, the Triune God, Father, Saviour and Comforter, be with you. Amen.

NINETEENTH SERVICE

"The Law of Liberty"

1. *INVOCATION*

As I come into thy presence, O Lord, help me to realize all the possibilities of this hour of communion with thee. Let the world be shut out, that I may be alone with thee. Grant me a new vision of some helpful truth, and a new impulse toward right living; for Christ's sake. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "All hail the power of Jesus' Name!"

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Psalm 107: 8-15.
James 1.

4. *PRAYER*

Gracious God, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy, remember not against me my many transgressions. Blot them out, according to thy promise, "Though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as white as snow, and though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." Oh, the wonders of thy grace in Jesus Christ! He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, that

by his stripes we might be healed. Salvation, oh the joyful sound—'tis music in mine ear. And now, being purged of sin, I would work out my salvation even to its uttermost possibilities. Give me the joyous spirit of liberty in Christ, who breaks the power of reigning sin and sets the prisoner free. Help me so to rejoice in thy salvation that the hardest task may not be grievous. Give me the abandon of a perfect faith. And this I ask, not for myself only, but for all in the fellowship of Christ. There is none of them good—no not one; but they are trying to be good. Lord, be patient with them. Help the stumbling to walk securely; lift the fallen to their feet. Awake those who sleep, and stimulate the indifferent to holy zeal. Befriend the lonely; make easy the beds of those who languish in weary suffering. Thine eyes behold them and thou lovest all. Go out on the dark mountains after the lost. Send thy Gospel to the benighted peoples in the regions beyond, that they too may rejoice in thee. Hear and answer for Jesus' sake. Amen.

5. HYMN: "My soul, be on thy guard."

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

"The Law of Liberty"

"Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only,

> deluding your own selves. For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth, but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing." (James 1:22-25.)

The Bible is a mirror; and the two men here portrayed stand for two classes of readers. One of them glances into the mirror, as a woman on the street takes a hasty look into a window to see whether her hat is on straight, and passes on. The other looks into the mirror intently and observes something that makes a deep and permanent impression upon him. He sees his natural or normal face;* in other words, he sees himself as he was created—sinless, erect, self-respecting, with eyes uplifted toward God. He sees this natural self environed by law; for as God is a normal being, so is man, the child of God. And he sees that within the bounds of this law, a law interwoven with the very nerve and fiber of his constitution, he is quite free as a child of God.

I. *We have here, at the outset, a Definition of liberty;* and this definition involves a paradox.

An idea prevails in some quarters that liberty and law are mutually incompatible; but in this ex-

*In the margin this is rendered properly "the face of his birth."

pression, "the law of liberty," it is suggested that they are in perfect accord with each other. How can that be?

It is a common and calamitous mistake to assume that liberty means absolution from the restraints of law. Milton speaks of certain ones—

> Who bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,
> And still revolt when truth would set them free.

This was the error of the French revolutionists, who cried, "Down with law, order, and government!" and paid the penalty in confusion worse confounded. No, my friend, liberty is not license. "Go as you please" is not the badge of a free man.

If one were to apply that definition to the affairs of every-day life, what would become of him? Will a disregard of the laws of hygiene set one free? Nay, it will bind one on a rack and torture one with the fiery arrows of insomnia, indigestion, and all the other ills that human flesh is heir to.

Let him apply it in the province of his intellectual life, and where will it land him? To call himself a "free-thinker" because he defies the prescribed rules of thought is as if a skipper were to ignore the maritime chart, run up the black flag, and become a wild rover of the sea. The open ports of the Commerce of Truth are closed against him; leaving him to wander over the boundless void of Agnosticism, where, as Fichte said, "A man knows nothing, not even that he knows nothing."

Nor is it less disastrous to apply this conception of freedom in the province of the moral life. He who insists on living as he pleases, despite the moralities, is far indeed from being free, since he has become a very bondslave of the basest lusts and passions of his meaner self.

We conclude, therefore, that the true definition of liberty is not exemption from the law, but perfect obedience to it. The law referred to, however, is not an exotic law, not a law promulgated by an arbitrary sovereign sitting on a distant throne, but the law of the normal man as made in the likeness of God.

Sin has swept us away from our moorings, so that we are neither where nor what we ought to be. The literal meaning of the word "transgression" is crossing the line. We have lost our true freedom in crossing the lines of our normal life. Is an engine free when it leaps the track and speeds across the open country? Is it not free rather when, achieving the very object of its being, it pursues its way along the rails constructed for it? Is a fish out of water free? Why not? Because it is "out of its element." Man in sin is precisely like a fish out of water. He, too, is out of his element. God intended him to move as easily and joyously on his upward course as a planet in its orbit; and only here shall he find his freedom, in this perfect obedience to perfect law.

II. *Has this Definition of liberty ever been realized?* Once, and once only.

It was exemplified in the life and character of Christ, who boldly issued the challenge, "Who layeth anything to my charge?" and received from his inquisitor this answer, "I find no fault in him at all!" This man has gone into history as the Ideal Man, by reason of his absolute and perfect obedience to the law of his own being. For this he was called "the Son of Man," as indicating what a man ought to be. The law of liberty was perfectly exemplified in him.

He looked into the Scriptures and saw "his natural face." In other words, he saw himself with the pathway of his earthly life marked out before him. He perceived that he had been "sent" into the world on a definite errand; namely, to suffer and die for our salvation. By the terms of this commission he was bound and yet quite free. In the volume of the Book, as in a mirror, he saw his life in silhouette; his birth, doctrine, miracles, buffetings, rejection, sufferings and death. "Thus it was written of him."

He filled out that silhouette in its minutest details. The ethical imperative was upon him. The keynote of his life was, "I must!"—"Thus it is written and thus it must be."—"The Son of Man goeth as it is written of him."—"All things must needs be fulfilled."—"He must needs go through Samaria."—"The Son of Man must be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Thus he was irresistibly bound by an eternal "needs be"; yet within those

bonds he was the freest of the free, because they were "the cords of a man."

He was constantly tempted to deviate from the appointed path; but he swerved not a hair's breadth. When tempted by Satan in the Wilderness to accomplish his purpose in some other way, his sufficient answer was, "It is written." When tempted by the people to accept the Messianic crown, he refused because this was not the appointed way. When tempted by Peter to further his plans by the use of carnal weapons, he said, "Put up thy sword into the sheath. How then should that be accomplished which is written of me?" When tempted by his own flesh, in Gethsemane, where every tingling nerve and sinew cried out against the cup of purple death, he, though sweating as it were great drops of blood, acquiesced in the Divine purpose, saying, "O my Father, if it be not possible that this cup should pass, thy will not mine be done!" Thus on he went, straight on, with his face set steadfastly toward the cross. That was the destination of his normal life. "It is finished!" he cried. "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do!" Close the book; all is fulfilled. So runs the story of the perfect Man.

Now this conformity of Christ to the law of his being was so far from being bondage that it kept him in the enjoyment of perfect freedom. And this was because he did not approach his task like a galley-slave going to the oars, but crying: "Lo,

I come! In the volume of the book it is written, 'I rejoice to do thy will'!"

III. *In this Definition of liberty we have the Secret of a Happy Life.*

The moment a man ceases to cross the Divine purpose and voluntarily adjusts himself to the plan marked out for him, he becomes free—

> As free as Nature first made man,
> Ere the base laws of servitude began.

But how shall we discover this Divine purpose concerning us? "Search the Scriptures." Here is the mirror in which a man "beholds his natural face." These are the "Sibylline leaves," in which our highest destiny is revealed. The Scriptures were intended to show us precisely what we ought to be; and to that end they show us precisely as God made us. The chief reason why Coleridge believed the Bible to be inspired was because, as he said, "It finds me!" He looked in the glass and saw himself there; not his sinful, abnormal self, but his "natural face"; that is, himself as God created him and intended him to be.

And, having seen that outline, the business of an earnest life is to complete it. The date of a man's conversion from sin to righteousness is when he perceives this Divine scheme and hears Reason saying, "That is true," and Conscience echoing, "That is right"; and when his Will starts up to respond, "So be it!" In that moment his chains are broken, and he becomes a free man; that is, free to recover his lost estate and thus to attain the

noblest and best—since he alone is the free man whom the truth makes free. At that instant of rebirth he proclaims his independence of all law whatsoever, except the higher law, or the law of his own being, which is, by the same token, the law of the being of his Father God.

He is now at liberty to be himself; free to work his way back to his Divine birthright; free to accomplish the career that was originally planned for him.

His life is thenceforth like the cruise of Captain Evans, who sailed out with the *Oregon* under sealed instructions during the Spanish War. He knew nothing of the business in hand until, out of sight of land, he opened those instructions and saw his cruise mapped out. Then on he sailed in the service of his government, with only a single thought. A thousand trumpets to right and left would have called him in vain. He had read his commission and must comply with it. So runs the purpose of an earnest life. It knows but one law —that law which covers the whole sphere of duty as set forth in the Word of God.

He who has learned that secret has found the deepest joy of living. "I will run in the way of thy commandments," sang David, "when thou shalt enlarge my heart." It is the enlarged heart which sees the Divine love at the center of the Divine law; which transforms "bounden duty" into pleasure and hears in the great word "Ought" a call to the very feast of God. To serve in that

spirit is to reign. To bow down thus is to be exalted; and to obey is to be free. The wings of a life transfigured in this manner are not like those of a monoplane, which must be laboriously lifted with a vast expenditure of energy, but like the wings of an eagle, which bear it aloft exulting to kindle its eyes at the noonday sun.

The line of argument pursued thus far, when expressed in terms of practical life, spells Success. Any other conception of freedom leads to failure in the long run.

The struggle in the heart of Jean Valjean was at this crossing of the ways. He had escaped from the galleys and was happy in evading his pursuers until he learned that another man, who resembled him, had been arrested and was in chains. Then the great question confronted him: Should he do, at all hazards, what he knew to be right? Should he give himself up and return to the intolerable anguish of the old, weary days? He decided otherwise; and "just there," says Hugo, "he heard an internal burst of laughter!" All joy forsook him; conscience awoke and shook its finger at him; the comfort of living was gone. He had broken the law marked out for him as a child of God. At length, the burden passing all endurance, he resolved to confess his identity and take the consequences. And "just there" was where he saw "the great light shining"—a light which was no other than the shining face of God.

In the Bible we have the biographies of two

Sauls who parted company at this perfect law. One of them was Saul, the King of Israel, who knew quite well what God expected of him and yet deliberately chose to carry out his own selfish will. The judgment passed upon him was this: "Thou hast rejected the Word of the Lord: wherefore he hath rent thy kingdom from thee!" Many a man has lost his crown and kingdom of manhood by insisting on having his own way.

The other was Saul of Tarsus, who lived at odds with the Divine plan until, on a certain memorable day, he heard a voice from heaven saying, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." He had indeed found it "hard" to fight against God. Hard is the way of the transgressor, because he is the manacled and fettered slave of sin. The turning point in the life of this man was when he answered the Voice, saying: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The remainder of his days were passed in happy obedience to the perfect law, in filling out the silhouette of his normal face, revealed in that vision as in the mirror of God. And when the end came, though under the flash of the headsman's ax, it found him glorying in freedom and ready to pass on. "I have fought a good fight," he cried; "I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day!"

A kingdom lost by self-will, or a crown won by subjection to the higher law—which shall it be?

To win back the lost birthright of my normal manhood is to follow Christ, who alone was absolutely true to the perfect law of liberty. He offers his hand to the struggler who has failed, saying, "Be of good courage; thy sins be forgiven thee"; and thenceforth he walks with the pardoned sinner as his Exemplar, saying, "Follow me! Lo, I am with you alway. Work out your own salvation! Work it out to the uttermost and best; for it is God that worketh in you!" To be at one with him is to be free. "He is the free man whom the Son makes free." And this is to enter into "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

8. *PRAYER*

I render thanks to thee, O Lord, for my deliverance from the bondage of sin. Thou hast not only blotted out my transgressions, but promised to break the chains of evil habit. Make me willing, I pray thee, to accept in full measure the glorious liberty of thy children. Give me the freedom wherewith Christ makes free. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "Come, thou Fount of every blessing."

10. *BENEDICTION*

Grace be unto thee, and mercy and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

TWENTIETH SERVICE

A Patchwork Religion

1. *INVOCATION*

IT is a wonder, O holy God, that a sinner should be permitted to approach thee. But thou hast invited me, and I look for a blessing in Jesus' Name. Lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me, and let thy peace, which passeth all understanding, come into my heart; for thy Name's sake. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "Come, we that love the Lord."

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Isaiah 1:11-20.
Matthew 9:10-26.

4. *PRAYER*

O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off. This makes me glad, because there are no barriers of misunderstanding to be broken down when I approach thee. Thou knowest my sins, my shortcomings, my blindness and deafness, my stumblings, backslidings, and wanderings: nevertheless, thou lovest me. I

know thou lovest me, because thou camest all the way from heaven to suffer and die for me. I know thou wilt hear my prayer for pardon, because thou didst bear the shame, penalty, and bondage of my sins in thine own body on the bitter tree. What shall I render unto thee for such immeasurable goodness? I will take the cup of salvation and pay unto thee my solemn vows. Make me obedient to thy holy will, ready to do or to suffer as pleaseth thee. And what I ask for myself I ask for thy people everywhere. Give them some measure of thy self-denying passion for souls. As thou wast sent by the Father to seek and to save, so hast thou sent them. Let the feet of thy disciples be swift to run and their hands eager to help. Prosper thy work, O Lord, and hasten the coming of thy Kingdom; to the glory of thine adorable Name. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "Go, labor on, spend and be spent."

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

A Patchwork Religion

"No man putteth a piece of undressed cloth upon an old garment; for that which should fill it up taketh from the garment, and a worse rent is made." (Matt. 9: 16.)

A PLAIN truth is here put in a homely way. No man, that is, no sensible man, would undertake to

repair an old garment with a patch of unfulled cloth, because the patch by shrinking would only widen the rent, and the tailor would have his labor in vain.

But the religious leaders of the Jews were disposed to do this very thing. They would cheerfully have fallen in with the teachings of Jesus, had he been willing to concede that his Gospel was a mere *addendum* to their ceremonial religion. They wanted a patchwork religion; but Jesus would have no such religion.

The thing was, in the nature of the case, utterly impossible; for the Gospel is not a sort of galvanism, but life out of death.

It is no hyperbole to speak of the sinner as being "dead in trespasses and sins." What do we mean by physical death? Why do we say of a man in his shroud that he is dead? Every particle that natural science could take cognizance of is there; every atom of lime, carbon, and phosphorus that entered into his physical constitution. But something has gone out of it. What has gone out of it? Physical life. How do we know that? Because the man can no longer perform his physical functions. He has eyes, but he can not see; ears, but he can not hear; a heart, but his pulse no longer beats.

In like manner, when the sinner is spoken of as "dead," it is meant that he is incapable of performing the functions of spiritual life. His brain, conscience, will, and heart have no motion toward God. Tell him the story of the Cross and he sheds

no tears, feels no gratitude, has no personal interest in it.

Just here Christ enters, saying: "I am come that ye who are thus dead may have life." This is the *god-spel,* the "good news." The moment a sinner comes into vital touch with Christ by faith, he is reanimated—that is, "regenerated"—under the influence of the Spirit. It is not enough to put a placard on the breast of such a man, saying, "Behold, he lives!" He must be "quickened from the dead." So said Jesus, "Except a man be born again he can not enter into the kingdom of God."

The Jews were not alone in their desire for a patchwork religion. The Neoplatonists of the early Church undertook in like manner to combine the Gospel with Greek philosophy. And they have had successors all along the ages.

A "New Theology" of this sort is now being exploited in certain quarters. As a matter of fact, however, there is nothing new about it. There is not an item in the New Theology that has not been current in former times. And whatever phase it assumes it invariably involves a practical denial both of sin as spiritual death, and of the Gospel as the power of an endless life.

I. *One form of the New Theology, so called, is Antitheism.*

It would hardly do to call it Atheism, since it is advocated within the Church; but it is, to all intents and purposes, a denial of God.

It sometimes takes the name of "Ethical Cul-

ture." In this case it emphasizes the duty of building character, or making the most of one's self. But not even this alluring form of selfishness can express the substance of the Gospel, since its primal precept is "Look out for Number One."

At other times it appears under the name of "Altruism," or Benevolence. Now it emphasizes the duty of each man toward the next man. Its cabalistic phrase is "Look out for Number Two." And this usually refers not to the spiritual but to the physical needs of the other man.

In both cases it will be observed that there is a practical elimination of God. Not, of course, that God is denied: but his influence is reduced to a minimum so low that, as Laplace said of his system of astronomy, "We can manage to get on without Him." He is not needed to account for the present order of things, because the present order of things is accounted for by the calm and uninterrupted processes of natural law. He is not needed to work miracles, since miracles are discredited, both those of Scripture and others. It is true that God is not formally renounced or disavowed; but Theism is used as a mere conventional patch to cover a hole that would otherwise expose the nakedness of the system. It need scarcely be said that, within the philosophy of Christ, such a bowing of God off the premises is impossible, since he is first, last, midst and all in all.

II. *A second phase of the New Theology is Legalism.*

We can conceive of but two plans of salvation.

One is salvation under the Law. The Law is good as far as it goes. "He that keepeth it shall live by it." But suppose the Law is broken, what then? The result is sin. The sinner is still under the Law, and its sentence passes upon him, "The soul that sinneth it shall die!" This is spiritual death or alienation from God.

The Law is a hard taskmaster. So far as pardon is concerned, it is impossible. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." To-day's obedience can not expiate the disobedience of yesterday; any more than paying cash from now on will cancel the accrued debts of a bankrupt. The young man who came to Jesus inquiring the way of eternal life protested that he had tried earnestly to keep the Commandments from his youth up: nevertheless, conscious of some mortal deficiency, he was moved to cry, "What lack I yet?" What was it that he lacked? The assurance of pardoned sin. And pardon of sin the Commandments can not give. Unless there be an interposition from some quarter, the sinner is left to expiate his sin. The Law works both ways: "he that doeth the Law shall live by the Law"; and, conversely, he that breaketh the Law shall die by it.

The other plan of salvation is under Grace. Grace and *gratis* are cognate words. To believe in Christ, who was "wounded for our transgressions," is to be "healed by his stripes"—healed "without money and without price." Our sins are

blotted out, sunk in the depths of an unfathomable sea, where God shall remember them no more against us. On what condition? Faith; that is, acceptance of the gift. So it is written, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the Law of sin and death. For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the ordinance of the Law might be fulfilled in us." Thus the Law, which is otherwise a hard taskmaster, becomes "a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ."

But there is no Grace in the philosophy of Legalism. In so far as Grace is recognized at all, it is a mere patch on morality. If heaven is ever won, it must be won by personal merit. Far be it from those who speak after this manner to deny the Grace of God! The full meaning of pardon and the imputation of Christ's righteousness is simply explained away; and this is done so effectively that the sinner is left to the cold mercies of the broken Law.

III. *The third phase of the "New Theology" is Liberalism;* so called, apparently, because of the great liberties which it takes with Truth as revealed in the Word of God.

I know of only two ways of arriving at truth; one by revelation, and the other by invention.

The Christian who believes in Revelation rests

on the authority of the Word of God. To him a "Thus saith the Lord" is final. He professes to accept the Bible as his "infallible rule of faith and practice," and acts accordingly. He comes to it like a "prospector" with a pick on his shoulder searching for truth. He does not expect to make gold, or to invent it, or to develop it out of his inner consciousness—only to discover it. He believes the gold is there before striking a blow of the pick; and he pursues his quest under the direction of his Master, who said, "Search the Scriptures because in them ye think ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me."

The "liberal," on the other hand, "makes his final appeal," not to the Scriptures, but to his own "inner consciousness." This makes truth not a discovery, but an invention; and every man must invent it for himself. He is like an alchemist who does not go out among the hills prospecting for gold, but shuts himself up in his laboratory, with crucible and chemicals, and proposes to manufacture it.

Of course Liberalism does not renounce the Bible; on the contrary, it professes to receive it, but not as an infallible rule of faith and practice, nor as ultimate authority concerning anything. It accepts it as a patch put on personal opinion to cover a bad rent in the spiritual wardrobe of the free-thinker. Thus the Scriptures are an old wine-skin, into which one pours the product of his inner consciousness, with the result that the wine-

skin breaks and the wine runs out. The attitude of the truth-seeker in this case is as hopeless as was that of Theodore Parker who, on being reminded of what the Scriptures said with reference to a vexed question in theology, is reputed to have said: "I do not propose to accept that statement on the authority of any such person as God."

IV. *The fourth and only remaining phase of the "New Theology" to which reference need be made, is Ceremonialism.*

We are familiar with two forms of religion in these days. One of them has been called "Churchianity"; the other is Christianity. The former consists in outward form, the latter in an inward life.

Far be it from me to say aught against the Church. It would not have been founded and fostered by Christ had he not intended that all who truly love and follow him should come into organic connection with it. The Church is his Bride; and those who hastily criticise the Church would do well to inquire whether the Bridegroom is pleased with their criticisms. It remains, however, that to depend on Church-membership for salvation is the extreme of folly. One may be in the Church and not of it. One may call himself a Christian without being in vital touch with Christ. The Pharisees were the best Church-members of their time; yet they were spoken of as "whited sepulchers, fair without but within full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." Sacraments save no souls. For an

unregenerate man or woman to come into the Church gives no guarantee of having passed from death unto life.

For Christianity is Life. "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." Profession is one thing, regeneration is another. The man who enters the church without expecting to be saved by it, but because he is saved and desires to ally himself with the great fellowship of those who are bound together by a common purpose to live for Christ, is not simply a "professor" but a follower of Christ. Such a man is "alive toward God."

It is to be feared, however, that there are some in our churches who make their Christianity a mere patch on Church-membership; who put their real reliance not in having their lives hid with Christ in God, but in having their names on the roster as "members of the church in good and regular standing." A hope like this is not only frail, but undependable as a spider's web.

It means something to be a Christian; something very true and serious. It means, to begin with, an absolute and unreserved surrender to Christ, in pursuance of his word, "No man can serve two masters." It means the sense of free pardon as against all works of both the moral and the ceremonial law. It means sanctification by the Spirit as against all cherished sin; in other words, loyal and faithful service in co-operation with the Spirit of God.

Our religion is an exclusive one; as exclusive as light is exclusive of darkness; as momentum is ex-

clusive of inertia; as life is exclusive of death. There can be no patchwork in these premises. It would be as wise to suggest that light is a patch put upon darkness. At the rising of the sun all shadows flee, like ghosts across the hills. So at the coming of Christ everything else goes. He is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. He fills the horizons of life. He becomes all in all.

The man who was found at the Marriage Supper without the robe which the king's chamberlain had provided for all guests, was reproved by the king, in this wise: "How camest thou in hither not having on the wedding garment?" To have answered, "My robe is of the finest, and is adorned with jewels," would have been foolishly vain. How much less valid would be the excuse of one who should intrude upon the heavenly feast in a patchwork garment, where the guests are clothed in fine linen, clean and white; of whom it is written, "These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

8. *PRAYER*

> O Lord, deliver me from vain show and pretense in my religious life. Give me a sincere desire for truth and righteousness. Plant my feet on the King's highway; lead me clear to heaven's gate; and grant me an abundant

entrance, in the name of my Redeemer. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee."

10. *BENEDICTION*

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you. Amen.

TWENTY-FIRST SERVICE

Bad Habits

1. *INVOCATION*

BLESSED LORD, enable me to worship thee aright in praise and prayer. Open unto me the Scriptures, and help me so to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest, that by patience and the comfort of thy Holy Word I may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which thou hast given in Jesus Christ. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds!"

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Proverbs 1:10-23.
Matthew 5:1-16.

4. *PRAYER*

I give thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, for all thy goodness. If I were to count thy blessings, lo! they are like the sands of the seashore for multitude. But best and greatest is thine unspeakable gift of salvation

in Christ. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. Forgive my sins, I pray thee, for the sake of him on whom were laid the iniquities of all. I confess that I have not only broken thy holy Law, but have come short of thy glory continually. Have mercy, Lord; O Lord, forgive; let a repenting rebel live. I am a great sinner, but thou art a great Saviour; wherefore I confidently look to thee for pardon and for sustaining grace. Keep back thy servant henceforth from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Break the chains of evil habit and safeguard me against my besetting sins. Show me the footprints of the faultless Son of Man, and enable me to follow them. Thou knowest my heart; search me and see if I desire not to run in the way of thy commandments. Give me all the graces of character, that in my walk and conversation I may adorn the doctrine of Christ; crown them with charity without which a Christian profession is as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. The sum of my desires is to be like Christ. Let his mind be in me. And let all who belong to his great household be like minded with him. So let righteousness prevail among thy people, and through them overspread the earth. And to thy great Name, O ever-blessed Triune God, shall be eternal praise. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "Am I a soldier of the Cross?"

7. *THE SERMON*

Bad Habits

> "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." (Jer. 13:23.)

Now this is everybody's sermon. Its subject is "Bad Habits"; and we all have them.

In some they are more conspicuous than in others. The drunkard, for example, bears a placard before and behind him, like a "sandwich man"; and his breath cries aloud, "I've been drinking; look at me!" And this is only one of a long catalogue of vices that redden the eyes and seethe the flesh.

On the other hand, there are vices such as envy, avarice, and sordidness, that dress well, walk erect, and pass as eminently respectable; but let no such sinner look askance at drabs and drunkards, saying: "God, I thank thee that I am not as these!" For God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, and he has given us to understand quite clearly that vulgar sins and respectable sins are alike in his eyes.

The word "habit" has in it the sum and substance of my sermon. It comes from the Latin *habere,* meaning "to have." A habit is a thing that grips us, fits us. There is a figure of singular felicity in the word, which makes it applicable to both clothes and character. A habit of riding is not synonymous with "a riding habit"; but the word describes them equally well. We wear our

habits as we wear our clothes; yet, there are some differences worth noting.

For one thing, *we can not acquire our habits as we do our clothes.*

We can not buy them either "ready-made" or "made-to-order." One may get a reputation in this manner at any newspaper office, but not a character; for, while a character is an outfit of habit, a reputation is only what people say about us. The latter is provided by our neighbors, whether we will or not; but the former is always home-made. Here every man is his own tailor.

The making begins with a single act, which by successive repetitions grows into a "habit," custom, or "costume," so that we put it on and wear it. There is a reference to this process in the familiar saying, "Sow an act and reap a habit; sow a habit and reap a character; sow a character and reap a destiny," and also in Shakespeare's words, "How use doth breed a habit in a man!"

Take profanity, for example, which is the meanest and most gratuitous of common sins. The first time a profane person takes the name of God in vain, it shocks and startles him; but, after years of practice, the oath easily dribbles from his lips.

Or, take avarice. No man is born a miser. He begins with the gripping of his first dollar when he cries, "It is mine, and I mean to keep it!" He gets and saves and hoards until at length, his soul turns yellow, and he looks with jaundiced eyes upon the yellow god.

Or, take drunkenness. The youth who has recently left home, on yielding to the temptation of the first glass, sees a viper at the bottom of it, and hears his mother's voice saying, "Look not upon the wine when it is red." It was so with Robert Burns when he first met Souter Johnny in Tam O'Shanter's Inn. The glass of spirits burned his throat. But as time passed the appetite grew upon him so that he was finally moved to say, "If there were a barrel of rum in one corner of this room and a loaded cannon in the other, I would risk the mortal danger to get my glass of rum."

Or take sensuality. The first time you attended the theater and saw an unclean play, do you remember how you flushed to the roots of your hair? But you have grown accustomed to that sort of thing: so that now it would take a good deal to make you change color, wouldn't it?

Or take unbelief. You were educated in a Christian household, where reverence was paid to sacred things. The first time you heard the denial of God or of God's Word, of Christ or his Atonement, your soul rose up in arms; but you have been reading flings at religion in the newspapers and elsewhere so long that you now take them as a matter of course, and do not hesitate yourself on occasion to make light of religious things. So true is it that use doth breed a habit in a man. Vice is, indeed—

> A monster of so frightful mien
> As to be hated needs but to be seen;
> Yet, seen too oft, familiar with her face:
> We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

It is thus that we make our moral outfit, like a suit of clothes, and put it on and feel more and more comfortable as we wear it.

But there is another point, whereat our morals differ from our clothes; to wit, *we can not dispose of them at will.*

It is easy enough to say, "I will quit," but not so easy to do it. There is truth in the old saying, "Hell is paved with good resolutions," as many a malefactor has discovered to his sorrow. And even if it were possible to make an end of one abominable thing, where would be the gain, so long as the root of evil remains in us? It is like cutting back a thorn-bush, only to have the strength of the amputated twig show itself in a more vigorous growth at some other point. For habit is simply an outgrowth of sin; and good resolutions are mere local applications that do not reach the seat and center of it.

Nor can a bad habit be worn out.

On the contrary, the longer we wear it the better it wears. And the longer we wear it the better it fits. It adjusts itself like a garment to the creases and sinuosities of mind and conscience; so that whereas it chafed at first it now "fits like a glove," as we say, and "is as easy as an old shoe." The older it grows the better we like it. Custom becomes "second nature." That which once required an effort is done at length without thought and involuntarily.

One of the riders in a recent bicycle race at

Madison Square Garden fell asleep on the fifth day, and kept moving automatically around the course. Such is the force of habit.

A missionary, engaged in rescue work among the criminal classes, succeeded in bringing a confirmed pickpocket to repentance. After years of earnest effort to reform, with occasional lapses into his besetting sin, the man lay dying. As the missionary was making the last prayer at his bedside he heard the dying man whisper, "Look out for your watch!" and found that the man's hand was stealthily moving toward it. Thus was the ruling passion strong in death.

But perhaps our bad habits will die with us? Impossible! I remember a saint grown gray in the service of Christ, who was fond of singing, as the shadows fell—

> The day is past and gone,
> The evening shades appear;
> Oh, may we all remember well
> The night of death draws near.
> We lay our garments by,
> Upon our beds to rest;
> So death will soon disrobe us all
> Of what is here possessed.

But we can not lay off our bad habits at death as "we lay our garments by." Having become our "second nature" they must go with us into the life beyond.

They are like the robe of Nessus which was dipped in the blood of the hydra and given to Hercules by his wife. At first it was not uncomforta-

ble; but presently when, the poison having penetrated his body, he would have divested himself of it, he found that it had become so interwoven with his nerves and sinews, that, driven to despair, he lighted his funeral pyre and died in the vain effort to destroy the fatal garment.

The thing that we call death is not revolutionary; it is simply the separation of soul and body. A man then moves out of the house which he had been living in; and all that is himself passes on. Wherefore it is written, "He that is righteous let him be righteous still, and he that is holy let him be holy still; he that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy let him be filthy still."

And after that, what? Every one "to his own place"; that is, to the place for which his habits and aptitudes, or, in other words, his character, shall have fitted him. It is related of Casper Hauser that, having been born in a dungeon and confined there without light from the outer world until his seventeenth year, he was then released only to find that the light smote upon his eyes with an insufferable pain, and the sounds of the streets fell like a crash of thunder in his ears; so that he begged to be taken back to prison, because the dismal silence and solitude were more tolerable than the comforts of freedom and normal life.

The reason why the thought of death is terrible to many is not because it ushers us into the unknown, but because it ends probation by crystallizing character and so "fixes us in an eternal state."

As the tree falleth, so also must it lie. Eternity finds us as death leaves us. The soul must needs, therefore, go to its own place. The gates of heaven are always open; but those who wander in outer darkness would find only an added misery were they to enter in. To such as are confirmed in sin there must, of necessity, be one place more insufferable than hell; that place is heaven, where truth and righteousness prevail and all are engaged in the pure worship of God.

It would appear that the case, then, is a desperate one. If a character made up of evil habits can not be laid aside at will, nor worn out, nor removed by death, what shall the sinner do? There is obviously nothing to be done but to call upon God. Our extremity is his opportunity. It was because there was no eye to pity and no arm to save that God made bare his arm on Calvary in our behalf. His only-begotten Son came to break every chain and bid the oppressed go free. He who lifts up his eyes to the hills, in his extremity, will find that the things that are impossible with men are possible with God.

The first thing that God does to help the man who, through indulgence in evil habits, has brought himself to a hopeless state, is to blot out his sin. And nothing further is possible until this has been done. For though a man were set upon his feet, proof against all possibility of further sin, the record of the mislived past would still remain against him. That reckoning must be met; and what a

hopeless handicap is here to him who would set forth upon a career of holy living! But "come now, saith the Lord, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, and though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." Blessed be the fountain of blood! The handicap is off! The ball and chain are removed! Here is no prisoner out on ticket-of-leave, but a sinner pardoned and set free. There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. God has so forgiven the past that he will remember it no more against us.

The next thing that Christ does is to enable us to get the better of our evil tendencies. He grants us his continual presence, saying, "Lo, I am with you alway." He buttresses our weakness with omnipotence, so that we are able to say, "When I am weak, then am I strong, because the power of God resteth upon me."

And still further he supplants the evil habits with new and better ones. In this is illustrated what Chalmers calls "the expulsive power of a new affection." Our Lord gives us better work to do. He puts a sickle in our hands and, pointing to the vineyard, says, "Go work to-day." The "old man of sin" grows weaker as "the new man in Christ Jesus" grows stronger. The old character fades out as the new takes on the color of the mind of Christ. This is sanctification. Old things thus pass away, and, behold, all things become new. We

form new habits of prayer, of Bible study, of devout meditation and of service in the Kingdom, and become more and more engrossed in them.

Is not this better than merely to cut out a bad habit here and there, with a good resolution, only to find that the root is ever throwing out new sprouts of sin? As the frost gathers upon your windows, would you undertake to remove it with a knife-blade? Would it not be more effective to kindle a fire on your hearth and melt it? In like manner evil thoughts and tendencies vanish when the heart is made right with God.

What, then, is the conclusion of the matter? I say, "Come to Jesus." But here again the force of habit dulls the meaning of that word of invitation and makes it sound like an oft-told tale. For there are those who have grown accustomed to rejecting Christ. There was a time, perhaps, in a revival long ago, when you heard the preacher say, "Come to Jesus," and you thought seriously about it but did not act; and later there came another opportunity and again you put it aside; and so it will be, year after year, until the habit of refusal has grown upon you.

There is an oriental story of an alchemist who, hearing that the philosopher's stone could be found near a certain river, strolled along its bank, with magnet in hand, testing successively all the pebbles he found. As, one by one, they made no response to the magnet, he flung them into the river. At length he found the pebble that when touched be-

came yellow in his hand; but alas! he had become so accustomed to the movement that this also was thrown into the river, and his golden opportunity was lost.

So come and go the eventful moments of life. So come the visions of an open heaven and beckoning hands. So once and again we hear the voice of Jesus calling, "Come unto me!" Alas for him who, by force of habit, rejects the last call, quenches the spirit and loses the possibility of life.

Once more then, by Divine commission I say, "Come to Jesus!" He alone can deliver from the bondage of evil habit and eradicate its root of sin. The invitation is yours; will you heed it?

8. *PRAYER*

> Grant thy blessing upon this service, O Lord, and form within me a deeper hatred of sin and love of holiness. Help me to keep myself unspotted from the world, that I may be presented faultless before thy throne, clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Strengthen me for duty and refresh me with thy grace; for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "What a friend we have in Jesus!"

10. *BENEDICTION*

> Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, be with you. Amen.

TWENTY-SECOND SERVICE

A Sinful Thought

1. *INVOCATION*

O THOU High and Holy One, who hast invited me to this communion, help me to enter thy presence with a penitent, believing, loving heart. And be pleased to lift upon me the light of thy countenance; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "My faith looks up to Thee."

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Psalm 34.
Acts 8:5-24.

4. *PRAYER*

Almighty and everlasting God, I thank thee for the great salvation that was accomplished on Calvary for all the children of men. I thank thee for the gracious proffer of its benefits on the sole and simple condition of faith in thy beloved Son. I thank thee for thy Church, endued with power from on high, and sent forth to proclaim the Evangel unto the uttermost parts of the earth. O God, stimulate thy people to more earnest zeal in the propagation of thy Gospel. Send laborers into the harvest and grant a great ingather-

ing, so that thy garners may be full. Incline the hearts of the impenitent to close in with thine overtures of mercy. Give great power to thy Word as it is preached to-day. Let those who minister in thy Name hide themselves behind the Cross, and so lift up Christ that multitudes shall be drawn unto him. Let the humblest of thy servants be ready to serve faithfully and patiently in his appointed place. Oh, that all were willing to run at thy command! Help me, Lord, to be true to my convictions. Save me from sin, from wandering, from spiritual indifference. If I know my own heart, I sincerely desire to glorify thee to-day, in my home-life and in my relations with those about me. I would realize that I am my brother's keeper. I can not live or die alone; because others are ever taking knowledge of me. I pray that they may take knowledge that I have been with Jesus. Let them be attracted to him by his graces reflected in me. Hear and answer for his Name's sake. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "There is a green hill far away."

6. *OFFERING*

7. *SERMON*

A Sinful Thought

"Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was

> given, he offered them money, saying, 'Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit.' But Peter said unto him, 'Thy silver perish with thee, because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this wickedness; and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee.'" (Acts 8: 18-22.)

The man here referred to as "Simon the Sorcerer" was a native of Cyprus, who claimed to be an emanation from God. He was a clever master of "the black art." He traveled about from city to city, performing feats of magic, and was familiarly known as "The Great Power of God."

In the city of Samaria he met his match. Philip, a lay evangelist, fleeing from persecution in Jerusalem, had come hither to preach the Gospel, and the people flocked to hear him. The sorcerer was amazed. Here was a man who wrought wonders that put all his tricks of legerdemain into the shade. Signs and miracles! The sick were healed, demons were exorcised, the blind received their sight.

What should Simon do? Clever man! He joined the church. His purpose was to discover the secret of Philip's power and appropriate it. How can the unworthy be prevented from thus assuming the livery of heaven? The tares and the wheat must grow together; God alone can prevent it.

But a greater surprise still awaited the sorcerer. In order to relieve the burden laid upon Philip by

the increasing interest in Samaria, two men, Peter and John, were sent from Jerusalem to assist him. Then, wonder on wonder! By the laying of their hands on believers they conferred the singular gifts known as charismata—the gift of tongues, the gift of prophecy, the gift of interpretation. Simon was amazed beyond measure. He was familiar with wizardry and Pythian demonstrations of every sort; but here was such magic as he had never dreamed of—visions, miracles, diversities of gifts!

Now what should he do? Clever man, again! He would buy the secret. Accordingly he offered a sum of money to the Apostles, saying, "Give me also this charism." But Peter said, "Thy silver perish with thee! Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, and pray the Lord that the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee."

The "thought of the heart" of this man is now to be considered. His name is linked etymologically with the sin of "simony," which is defined to be "the illegal sale or purchase of ecclesiastical livings or benefices." But the sin of Simon lay far deeper than that. It was in "the thought of his heart"; and the thought of his heart was precisely identical with the chief heresy of our time, which is the denial of the supernatural. We are asked to believe that all things occur by the calm processes of natural law. It is practically insisted that nothing is worthy of credence that can not be verified by the test of the physical senses. This means a

world without God, man evolved from frogspawn, a Bible without inspiration, and a religion without miracles. The statement is not overdrawn. We note on every side the effort to explain away everything that lies beyond the reach of our eyes, ears and fingers.

The thought of the heart of Simon is the basic thought of Naturalism in every age. It is the keynote of the philosophy of Laplace, who, on being reproved by Napoleon in this wise, "I see no mention of God in your philosophy," answered, "Ah, there lies its chief excellence; it leaves no room for God!"

In pursuance of this thought the sorcerer was led into a series of grievous errors.

The first was a Wrong View of the Profession of Religion.

He joined the church without a change of heart. By the mere entering of his name on the church-roll he became "a member in good and regular standing"; but his heart was not right before God. He may have deceived himself; he certainly deceived others. He was a mask-wearer, being in the church but not of it.

Is it not said, "He believed"? It is, indeed; but it is written, "The devils also believe and tremble." Faith is always orthodox; but it does not follow that orthodoxy is always faith. It is not enough that one should intellectually apprehend and assent to the historic facts of Christianity. Religion is a matter of the heart; for "with the heart man be-

lieveth unto righteousness." This is the meaning of Christ's saying, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves"; that is, Christ is to be apprehended as food is eaten and assimilated, so that it enters into our very nerve, sinew, blood, and every-day life. He who truly believes must be able to say, "I no longer live, but Christ liveth in me."

It is stated, also, that the sorcerer was "baptized." But here we note another of his misapprehensions. He seems to have regarded baptism as merely the initiatory rite of admission into the Church. The water was mere water to him; a sort of magical outward form. He did not perceive that it signified the washing away of sins; wherefore Peter said, "For I see that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." He was baptized but unconverted. His heart was not right before God.

It is said, also, that "he continued" with Philip and the disciples. He attended the meetings, went with them on their itineraries, and his conversion was, no doubt, heralded as a triumph of redeeming grace. There was nothing in it, however, but dumb show; for God looketh on the heart, and Simon at heart was an unchanged man.

It was a rare exchange of courtesies that is said to have passed between Sir Walter Raleigh and his executioner. "Which way, Sir Walter, wilt thou lay thy head upon the block?"—"So that my heart be right, friend, it matters not which way my head

lies." Far be it from us to belittle the importance of a creed; but there is many a true Christian who, while unable to discriminate between the Nicene and Athanasian symbols, can truly say, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee!"

The second mistake made by Simon, growing out of the materialistic thought of his heart, was a Wrong View of Religious Experience.

He believed that the operations of the Spirit could be accounted for on natural grounds.

A recent book by a learned scientist, on the Phenomena of Religious Experience, places the Christian's joy of salvation in the same category with the frenzy of voodoo priests and howling dervishes. This is of a piece with the prevailing tendency, in certain quarters, to obliterate the line between the natural and the supernatural, reduce Christ to the level of other teachers, and account for everything without a personal and self-revealing God.

The initial phenomenon of Christian experience is repentance. A man becomes sensible of sin, its shame and bondage and inevitable penalty; and he stands like the publican with fallen face, beating upon his breast and crying, "God be merciful to me the sinner!" To the looker-on, who regards sin as a mere disease, or, as the Christian Scientist would say, "a belief of mortal mind," this cry for mercy is an evidence of hypochondria. The penitent is in the doldrums—that is all!

And then Conversion. What is that? The Simonist says it is "turning over a new leaf." It

is resolving to tell the truth and pay one's debts and behave justly toward one's fellow-men. In other words, it is purely a human procedure—a mere whitewashing or veneering, at best. As such, it falls quite within the province of Simon's jugglery. "Presto, change!" Far different is the teaching of Jesus, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except one be born anew, he can not see the Kingdom of God." And except a man be born of water and the Spirit, that is, of cleansing and quickening, "he can not enter into the Kingdom of God." In this view of the matter all is supernatural, all is miraculous. "Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." All is mysterious; "The wind bloweth where it will and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The question raised in our time as to the supernatural in conversion is precisely the old question of Pentecost, to wit, new wine *versus* a new heart. If God were to make bare his arm in our sight, and reaching into the breast of a sinner take out a cold heart of stone and replace it with a living heart of flesh, it would be no more a miracle than that which he performs in the case of every man who is truly converted from sin to righteousness and brought into the Kingdom of God.

And after Conversion comes Sanctification. It is an error to think of Sanctification as a mere growth in the passive graces of character. It is

really the lifelong development of a Divine fervor in the soul. It is a constant approach to the mind of Jesus, who said, "The zeal for thy house shall eat me up." It is a growing apprehension of the fact that the world is nothing and Christ is all. It comes by the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire; and the fire kindles the whole man, more and more, until the world says of him, as Festus did of Paul, "Thou art beside thyself!" Call in Simon to explain the earnestness of a Christian, and he will point you to the voodoos and the dervishes. Ask him to explain the power of Peter at Pentecost, or of Whitefield in the open fields near London, or of Moody in the presence of penitent multitudes, and he will call it animal or psychic magnetism. But the pagans themselves were wiser than this; in their endeavor to account for the thunderbolt, they must needs call in Jupiter Tonans; even to them there was a God behind it.

The third mistake growing out of the thought of Simon's heart was a Wrong View of the Benefits of Religion.

He regarded it as a purchasable commodity; as Peter said, "Thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money." It is true that "Godliness is profitable for all things"; but it is beyond human power to purchase it.

There are many things that current coin will buy; such as lands and houses, fine raiment, books and pictures, a table spread with dainties and fruits "in season and out of season," pleasure of every

sort, popularity, political preferment, a seat in the upper house of Congress or an ecclesiastical "living." It will build schools, hospitals and libraries with the donor's name on the archway. It will crown the buyer's fame with a splendid tomb and a glowing epitaph, "Here lies Crœsus, Friend of Humanity and Servant of God."

But there are many things our currency will not buy. It may buy reputation, but not character; adulation, but not self-respect; position, but not a cubit of moral stature; luxury, but not an extension of life. The last words of Elizabeth were, "Millions of money for an inch of time!" But there was not money enough in the exchequer of England to purchase it. The world is enveloped with an atmosphere fifty miles deep; but all the power of the mighty queen could not buy a single breath of it.

And the Gift of God! That is beyond purchase. It is unspeakably precious, yet absolutely free. It is free as the air, which is conditioned only on our breathing it. Free as the water, which is conditioned only on our drinking it. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price!" God's grace is to be had for the taking. Nevertheless, the world is full of would-be buyers; flagellants, lashing their bodies for the sins of their souls in the hope of making merit to admit them to the Kingdom of God; moralists hoping to pur-

chase the unpurchasable with works of supererogation, forgetful of what the Master said, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent"; ceremonialists, making long prayers, and paying tithes of mint, anise and cummin, as if religion were an empty form, and God could be propitiated by it.

He who has truly apprehended the mystery of grace is like the lad who stood at the door of the king's conservatory, gazing wistfully at the clusters of grapes. He had saved his scant pennies to buy for his sick mother; and seeing the gardener, as he supposed, he made the proffer. It was not the gardener, however, but the king himself who answered, "You are mistaken; this is the royal conservatory; the king is not a seller, but a giver; and he gives right royally. Open your arms!" So is the grace of God. Let all who think, like Simon, to receive heaven as a *quid pro quo,* be advised that God is a Giver and gives right royally. His grace is *gratis;* and all who are willing may have it.

One more mistake the sorcerer made; to wit, in his Petition for Pardon.

"Pray ye the Lord for me, that none of these things of which ye have spoken, come upon me!" To his mind, sin was naught and penalty was all. Thus to the last his heart was wrong before God.

And when Peter said, "Repent of this thy wickedness; and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee," the "if" and "perhaps" were applicable not to God's pardoning

grace, but to the more than doubtful penitence of Simon. For there is no "if" or "perhaps" in the Gospel of grace. I have sought in vain, in current hymnaries, for a hymn that was familiar in my boyhood days; and I rejoice that I can not find it.

I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter pardon gives;
Perhaps, he may command my touch
And then the suppliant lives.
Perhaps he may admit my plea,
Perhaps may hear my prayer;
But if I perish, I will go
And perish only there.
I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die.

All such "ifs" and "perhapses" are born of little faith. The promise of God is Yea and Amen. The sin of Simon would have been pardoned on the instant had he thrown himself upon the grace of God. As it was, his penitence was but a summer cloud. Pliny says that he resumed his vocation as a sorcerer and was eminently successful; that after a splendid career in Rome he died from a fall, while attempting an ascension, and was buried on an island in the Tiber; and that his tomb was inscribed *Simoni Deo Sancto;* "To Simon the Holy God."

The work of the Evangel which stirred the avaricious curiosity of Simon in the city of Samaria is going on continually about us. The world is

being transformed by it. God is doing marvelous things. Men are repenting, being converted and passing under the baptism of fire. What shall we think of it? Is it natural or supernatural? Is it legerdemain or is it the work of God?

If it be of God, it behooves all thoughtful people to fall in line with it. To accept the interpretation of those who undertake to explain away its supernatural character and "turn God out of doors," is to fall into mortal error and run upon the bosses of the shield of the Almighty. If the explanation of Christ himself be true, he is the only Saviour, and there is no other rational course but to take up the cross and follow him.

8. *PRAYER*

> O Lord, I am prone to vain and unworthy thoughts of thee. Enlarge my heart, clarify my vision, and bring my whole life into perfect accord with thy beneficent plans. Help me to love thee with a pure and fervent heart, and to serve thee faithfully; for the Saviour's sake. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "Take my heart, O Father, take it!"

10. *BENEDICTION*

> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you. Amen.

TWENTY-THIRD SERVICE

The Golden Silence

1. *INVOCATION*

O God, my Father, enable me to serve thee this day with a willing and a cheerful mind. Meet me at its threshold with a blessing, and enable me to worship thee in the beauty of holiness; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "Joy to the world, the Lord is come."

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Exodus 20:1-21.
Luke 20:1-26.

4. *PRAYER*

O God, reigning in light and glory unapproachable, I thank thee for the manifestation of thyself in thy holy Word. Thou mightest have withdrawn into thy secret place, and left me to grope vainly after thee like a blind man feeling his way along a wall; but thou hast drawn the veil so that all who seek may find thee. Blessed be thy Name for thy holy Word, wherein thou hast fully revealed thy gracious plans. Thou seest how the Adversary is continually assailing this citadel of Truth: bring thou his purposes to naught;

yea, overrule them for thine own greater glory. Thou seest how simple souls are taken up in the lips of talkers and beguiled into unbelief. Direct the steps of thy little ones, that they go not astray. Incline the hearts of those who profess thy Name to search the Scriptures with all diligence and sincerity, because the entrance of thy Word giveth light. Enable me to search so as to read thy love between the lines. Let thy written Word make me acquainted more and more with the Incarnate Word. Help me to see the face of my Saviour in its pages—the face that was so marred, yet so divinely beautiful. And hasten the time when the whole world shall have access to thy Word. Send forth thy truth, O Lord, into the regions of darkness. Cast down Dagon from his throne and let the heathen bow at thy footstool. Rule thou, O God of Salvation, from the river even unto the ends of the earth. And the glory shall be thine forever and ever. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "Majestic sweetness sits enthroned."
6. *OFFERING*
7. *THE SERMON*

The Golden Silence

"And the high-priest stood up, and said unto him, 'Answerest thou nothing?' But Jesus held his peace." (Matt. 26:63.)

I AM glad I'm a Christian for many reasons, but

chiefly for these two: because in Christ I have a Saviour who delivers from sin and a Counsellor who teaches all that is necessary for time and eternity.

He came into the world "to bear witness to the truth." He was the Incomparable Teacher. His words were wonderful and his silence was no less so. It was eloquent silence. He knew when to speak and when to hold his peace. He could have answered every question that was ever addressed to him, for he knew everything; but there were occasions when he declined to open his lips.

First: *He had nothing to say as to Self-evident Truth.* He carried no coals to Newcastle. There are some facts that are so obvious as to require no proof; such as, "Things that are equal to the same thing are equal to each other." There are other facts that are believed so universally as to be called intuitions. One of these is the being of God. In all the teachings of Jesus, you will find no attempt to prove the Divine existence. If you care for that, you must go to schools of Science or Philosophy or Theology, where the ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments are served up *ad libitum.* But Christ assumed this doctrine as a postulate. It was enough for him that the world accepted it.

So also with reference to Immortality. Ask Jesus, "If a man die, will he live again?" and he will hold his peace. If he says anything it will be, "Inquire within." Why should he undertake to

prove something that everybody believes on the testimony of the inner consciousness, "I shall live and not die"? He found his disciples sharing the common conviction as to God and Immortality, as to Human Responsibility, the Authority of the Scriptures, and other fundamental truths; and he wisely left them there. Had they been wrong, he was under bonds to correct them; otherwise he would not have been an honest man. He knew all the facts in the case and could easily have said, "You are mistaken"; but he never said so. What he did say was this, "If it were not so, I should have told you."

Secondly: *He had nothing to say regarding the Non-essentials.* His ministry on earth was limited to a brief period of three years. He could not afford to waste time or energy in the consideration of matters that had no application to practical life.

The scribes and Pharisees once asked him, "Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with defiled hands?" He declined to be drawn into a discussion of such trumpery conventionalities, but replied in this wise: "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites; This people honoreth me with their lips but their heart is far from me. Handwashings forsooth! Look to your hearts! For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, false witnesses, railings, deceit, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within and defile the man!"

On another occasion a man said to him, "Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me." As this was a case for the probate court and of little or no value in relation to the spiritual life, he declined to have anything to do with it. His answer was, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" This was followed by the injunction, "Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness," which he emphasized by the parable of a certain rich man who, having much goods, said to his soul, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry"; but God said, "Thou foolish one, this night thy soul is required of thee." So he consistently declined to be drawn aside into puerilities. To his mind the discussion of such quiddities as mint, anise and cummin was flat, stale and unprofitable. He was thinking of larger things. He was too busy to be letting buckets into empty wells and drawing nothing up.

Thirdly: *He had nothing to say as to the State Secrets of God.* He knew all about the Divine Decrees; but he made no didactic excursions into "the wandering mazes of fixed fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute."

A man once said to him, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" His answer was, "Strive to enter in by the narrow door; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up and hath shut to the door and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open unto us'

he shall answer and say unto you, 'I know you not.' " In other words, the question as to the number of the elect was for God to determine; and it was as unseemly as it was useless to urge it. "The secret things belong unto God."

As he was speaking of the fall of Jerusalem and the final "restitution of all things," with the coming of the Son of Man, his disciples asked him, saying, "Tell us when shall these things be?" He ignored the point of their question, saying, "Let no man deceive you. If any shall say, Lo, here is Christ, or Lo, there, believe him not. Watch! Watch! for in an hour when ye think not the Son of Man cometh." That is, the times and seasons are with God.

A like thing happened in his last interview with the disciples on Mount Olivet. His face was shining with the glory of his resurrection, insomuch that they were moved to ask, "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father hath set within his own authority; but ye shall be my witnesses unto the uttermost parts of the earth. All authority is given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations."

A learned rabbi, hearing him speak of Regeneration, asked him to explain it, saying, "How can these things be?" Had he propounded that question to one of our modern psychologists he would have received a learned disquisition on the rationale

of the New Birth; but Jesus, who had been in the bosom of the Father and knew all about the matter, declined to explain, simply saying, "The wind bloweth where it will; and thou hearest the voice thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

But while the Incomparable Teacher had no answer for those curious and inquisitive folk who wished to know about axioms and non-essentials and state secrets, he had much to say about the great problems that have to do with our well-being here and hereafter.

I. *As to his own Personality he spoke so clearly that none could misunderstand him.* He said that he was the Son of God; not a Son by creation or by adoption, but "the Son," the "only-begotten Son," the one, lone, solitary "begotten" Son of God. He spoke of "the glory that he had with the Father before the world was." He arrogated to himself the "incommunicable name" of Jehovah when he said, "Before Abraham was I AM." Let it be observed that, however men may now twist and distort his language into strange meanings, there was among his contemporaries no misunderstanding about it.

At his trial before the Sanhedrin he declined to answer the trumped-up charges that were brought against him. For these he had "never a word." But when the high-priest said, "I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou art

the Christ, the Son of God!" he answered in the strongest possible form of affirmation, "Thou hast said," adding, "Henceforth ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming in the clouds of heaven." The high-priest thereupon rent his clothes, saying, "He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have ye of witnesses? Behold, ye have heard the blasphemy. What think ye?" They answered and said, "He is worthy of death." So he died for "making himself equal with God."

II. *He was equally clear as to His Mission.* He who had been "with the Father before the world was" had come into the world "to seek and to save the lost."

He claimed to be the Messiah, of whom the Scriptures had spoken in an unbroken line of prophecy from the protevangel, "The seed of woman shall bruise the serpent's head" to the last prediction of Malachi concerning the rising of "the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings."

The coming of this Messiah was known as "the Hope of Israel." The general impression was that the time was now ripe for his appearing. The people were watching for him.

To the woman of Samaria, who said, "The Messiah when he cometh will tell us all things," he answered, "I that speak unto thee, am he!"

At the beginning of his ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth, he announced his Messiahship in plainest terms. Taking for his text the Lesson

of the Day from the prophecy of Isaiah, where it is written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord," he said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears!"

He maintained this claim to the last. It was set forth in the *titulum* that was affixed to his cross. The superscription read, "This is the King of the Jews." It was written by Pilate in recognition of the Messianic claim of Jesus and in derision of the Jews. They came to him and said, "Write not, The King of the Jews, but, that 'He said I am King of the Jews' "; but Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written." So, even in his shameful death, his Messianic claim as the Hope of Israel was placarded for the world through all succeeding ages.

III. *No less clear and explicit was his teaching as to his Plan of Salvation.* His purpose was to save sinners from their sins by "bearing their sins in his own body on the tree." He had come to die in the stead of guilty men; and there was no other way. The law must be satisfied—the law which said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." His blood alone could cleanse; for "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin."

His words are, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die,

it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." And again, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself"; to which the sacred writer adds, "This he said signifying by what death he should die."

In his interview with Nicodemus, while he declined to explain the doctrine of Regeneration, he was very explicit with respect to the Atonement; for he said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the Wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life."

On his last journey through Cæsarea-Philippi he spoke freely with his disciples as to his approaching death: "Behold the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes, and they shall condemn him to death and shall kill him." Knowing all that awaited him he faltered not, but heroically "set his face steadfastly to go."

And when the great tragedy was over and he had risen from the dead, he said to certain of his sorrowing disciples whose eyes were holden, so that they knew him not, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory?" If this plain speech of Jesus means anything it means that his death is the central fact in the plan of salvation; so that if we are ever saved it will not be through his life or example, but because he died for us.

IV. *His teaching is equally clear as to our Part*

in this great Plan. We can do nothing but cordially acquiesce in it.

But that means everything. "What shall I render unto the Lord for his loving-kindness? I will take the cup of salvation and pay my vows." To believe is to accept. Faith is the hand stretched forth to take the free gift. But faith is vitally necessary. The water of life is without money and without price, but we shall perish of thirst unless we dip it up and drink it. He that believeth shall be saved. "Only believe!" For God so loved that world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

The opposite of this is the doctrine of salvation by works. One of the vexed questions among the Jews was, "What is the work of God?" that is, What sort of moralities will commend us to him? Our Lord was asked on one occasion, "What must we do that we may work the works of God?" He answered, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." This can mean only that faith on our part, and faith alone, is the saving grace.

And having thus accepted Christ, all the rest is to follow him. Follow! Follow! Follow! How he rings the changes on that word! "What is that to thee?" he said to Peter. "Follow thou me."

If I profess to be a Christian, it devolves upon me to follow him as my atoning Priest, even to Calvary if need be, that I may share in his passion

for the souls of men; to follow him as my Prophet to Olivet that I may sit with his other disciples, learning at his feet; to follow him as my King up to heaven's gate, that I may claim the promise, "To him that overcometh will I give to sit together with me in my throne!" He is my Prophet, Priest and King! Wherever his footsteps lead, thither I am bound to follow him.

Yes, I'm glad I am a Christian, not only because he saves, but because he teaches all along the way. And his teaching is sufficient. If he decline to answer any question it is because an answer would not help me. And, loving him, I shall learn as much from his silence as from his speech. I shall not complain if sometimes, in the reserve of Godhood, he refuses to open his lips.

At the time of the assassination of President Lincoln, a singular tribute was paid to the Divine silence in the inscription that was suspended on our City Hall, "Be still and know that I am God!"

Out of the heavens, once upon a time, there came a Voice that the passing centuries have not hushed: "This is my beloved Son: hear ye him!"

O Blessed and Incomparable Teacher, speak thou and we will hear; or hold thy peace, if thou wilt, and we will be silent before thee!

8. *PRAYER*

O blessed Lord, my Prophet, Priest and King, thou hast an undisputed right of possession in all my powers of body and soul.

Hear me now, as I renew my vows of consecration. Take me, Lord, and use me evermore to thy glory; for thy Name's sake. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "Just as I am."

10. *BENEDICTION*

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace always. Amen.

TWENTY-FOURTH SERVICE

The Messages of the Snow

1. *INVOCATION*

ACCEPT, O God, my morning sacrifice. Enable me to lift up, with holy hands, my heart unto thee. I would put myself under the shadow of thy wings, so that this day may be spent in labor of love and patience of hope. Direct me in all things to the glory of thy Name. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "Jesus, thy Name I love."

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Isaiah 55.
Romans 5:1-11.

4. *PRAYER*

I thank thee, Father, for the privilege of calling myself after the Name of thy beloved Son. Help me to adorn my profession in my daily walk and conversation. I want to be a consistent Christian, living as Christ lived, and doing the work that he has committed unto me. I pray that my light may so shine before men that they may see my good works and glorify thee. Bless, in like manner, all

other Christians. Give them a large conception of the privileges of the Christian life, and also of its grave responsibilities; for we are compassed about by witnesses who take knowledge of the Gospel as they see it reflected in us. Let thy benediction rest on the universal Church, the great organism through which, by the influence of thy Spirit, thou art restoring the world to truth and righteousness. Hasten the time when thy bride shall be without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing. And speed the day when sinners shall come to thee as doves flocking to their windows. Then shalt thou come in the clouds of heaven to establish thy Kingdom on earth, and every knee shall bow before thee. Then shall all the children of men unite, with angels and archangels, in glorifying thee. For thou, Saviour of the world, art worthy to receive honor and dominion and power forever and ever. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "In the Cross of Christ I glory."

6. *OFFERING*

7. *SERMON*

The Messages of the Snow

"As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven." (Isaiah 55: 10.)

IT is a pity that so many people are deprived of the delights of country life. Poor prisoners of the

city! What do they know of singing birds and flowing brooks, of blooming fields and golden harvests? Or what of the joys of winter—the glassy river, the tinkling bells, the merry shout of children issuing from the schoolhouse into the falling snow? To us the snow means nothing but unsightly heaps at the street corners, carts and horses and shouting drivers; the important problem being how to get rid of it.

The Jews, like many other Orientals, knew little of the snow, except as they saw it gleaming on the distant heights of Hermon or of Lebanon. It is safe to say that, in other circumstances, Jesus, as the great Interpreter of nature, would have drawn many practical lessons from it. There are but few references to the snow in Scripture; yet they are enough for helpful suggestion in many ways.

The snow brings us a message, to begin with, in simplest terms of Common Sense.

I catch a flake in my palm; or, better, in deference to its fragile beauty, on a velvet cushion. There it lies, like a letter from somewhere, asking as plainly as if pen and ink had written it, "Who made me?" A single flake gives us the query; two flakes furnish a coincidence; three greatly complicate the problem; and four suggest a mystery beyond all solution, unless we accept God.

The only other answer to the query is chance. Wherefore let us reason under the law of chances. How shall we get our first term? By multiplying the first flake by the second, the second by the third,

and so on indefinitely. Keep on multiplying until you have exhausted all the snow that covers the billowy fields. Then multiply that product by the last snow storm, and thus until you have included all the snow that ever fell. Now, what have you? A line of figures belting the globe, again and again and again, like parallels of latitude. Let us proceed now with our calculation in the Rule of Three: *As this line of figures is to one, so is the probability of something or Somebody behind the snow storm to the hypothesis of chance or a fortuitous concourse of atoms.* Thus by a process as simple as any school boy uses in his arithmetic, we are led to perceive why the Bible pronounces him to be a fool who says, "There is no God."

Our next message is in more rigid terms of Logic.

A close examination of the snowflakes under a microscope will reveal certain facts:

First, *that every one of them is perfect;* and in this it differs from all human work. A man-made masterpiece may approach near, very near, perfection, but will never reach it. Put the finest lace under the glass, and the fairy figure that seemed to run so delicately through it will be seen to be as irregular as an old-fashioned worm-fence. On the other hand, the snowflake grows finer and finer the more you magnify it.

Secondly, *we note an infinite variety in the falling flakes.* Des Cartes announced that he had discovered ninety-three different forms or patterns; but

the words had scarcely fallen from his lips before another declared that he had found nine hundred. It is now an accepted fact that there is no limit to their diversity. They are like the leaves that fall in the forests of Vallombrosa, in that no two of them are precisely alike.

But, thirdly, *all these varied forms are uniform,* in that they are patterned under a common law, the singularly beautiful law of crystallization. How is this to be accounted for? What has science to say about it? Ask the scientist to define the snow. He will tell you that it is congealed vapor. But what is vapor and how congealed? Go on with your explanation. And whence this law? Law is usually supposed to suggest a lawgiver. If I were to unfold one of the common ordinances of this city and tell you that it simply happened, with no lawgiver or legislature behind it, you would have good reason to laugh at me. Yet there are those who smile at our credulity when we suggest God. Credulity, forsooth! It requires a thousand times more to suppose that crystallization is a "fortuitous circumstance" than to believe in Him who sits enthroned upon the circle of the universe. Go back as far as you can in scientific research, and you will never reach the ultimate. You come to a curtain hanging before an inner chamber, and there you are bound to pause. We draw the curtain and stand in the presence of the Holiest of All.

The next message of the falling snow is in the realm of Physics.

It is written, "Lo here is the hiding of his power."

> Out of the bosom of the air,
> Out of the cloud-folds of his garment shaken,
> Over the woodlands wild and bare,
> Over the harvest fields forsaken,
> Silent and soft and slow
> Falleth the snow.

In this apparent weakness, however, is the hiding of the Divine strength. You trample the snowflakes under your feet, the children pack them into snowballs and play with them; you are treading on dynamite and they are hurling thunderbolts at one another! For every flake has an immeasurable potency. It stands for the quiet, constant, persistent, infinite Power of God. Men work with noisy demonstration, with the creak of machinery and the shouting of many voices; God builds his temple without the sound of hammer or of ax. At five o'clock on every afternoon you may hear the sound of rapid detonation from beyond the Hudson; this means (more's the pity!) that men are blasting at the Palisades. All day they are placing charges and laying fuses; then the spark is applied, there is a great explosion and the ground trembles beneath our feet. Not so does God work. He drops a snowflake into a cleft of the rock, re-enforces it with other of its feeble kinsfolk, and they take silent hold on the roots of the mountain and rend it asunder. While we are arguing as to his

being, *pro* and *contra,* he is riding through the universe in his chariot of Omnipotence, and its ponderous wheels move as silently as the waving of a butterfly's wings.

The next message of the snow brings us into the larger realm of metaphysics; that is, of the higher man.

It is written, "He giveth his snow like wool," rather like a covering of wool; that is to say, a coverlet. The figure appeals to us. We are back again in the trundle-bed, and the dear mother has come to hear us say our good-night prayer, and then arrange the coverlet and tuck us in. So God cares for all nature; the seeds and roots, the burrowing and hibernating creatures: he covers them all.

> So through the blue serene,
> For sight too fine,
> The ethereal miter flies,
> Killing infectious damps, and the spent air
> Storing afresh with elemental life.

O Infinite Love! Blessed Mother-love of God! "And shall he not much more care for you, O ye of little faith?" Aye, said Jesus, "as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings."

The lesson here is faith. We are hearing much in these days of the simple life; but to discuss the question as if it were merely one of spending a little more or less is greatly to belittle it. The simple life is possible only to one who rids himself of pride and worry by getting into right relations with God.

We find our next message in the province of Theology proper; that is, respecting the character of God.

It is written, "His raiment was white as snow." The Divine holiness is set forth in three visions of the glorious One. He was seen by Daniel, when the earth powers had vanished, approaching in a chariot of flame to take the seat of universal empire; and, behold, "His garment was white as snow." He was seen again in the Mount of Transfiguration, his face shining as the sun, and his garments white as no fuller on earth could whiten them. And still again he was seen by the Evangelist of Patmos, walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, clothed in a priestly garment falling to his feet, with seven stars in his right hand, his countenance shining as the sun shineth in his strength, and his head and his hair as white as snow. And the multitude around the throne were ever praising him and saying, "Holy, holy, holy!"

But what of us? We must needs stand afar off, in our alienation, and cry like Isaiah, "Woe is me; for I am a man of unclean lips!" Our sins have separated betwixt God and us. "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Let us lift up our prayer: "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin; for I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." Is there any answer? Can those who are afar off be brought nigh? Can

the soul be purged of its iniquity and restored to God?

Aye: for here is another message of the snow; it brings a flag of truce with overtures of peace, "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow." Here is the Gospel of Reconciliation. God comes out while the prodigal is yet a great way off, and falls upon his neck and kisses him.

The blackest thing in the world is not jet, nor ebony, nor the down on a raven's breast, nor the pupil of an Indian's eye; it is the blight at the heart of a flower that is smitten with death. So the blackest thing in the moral universe is sin at the center of the soul, spreading its corruption through the whole nature of man.

The reddest thing in the world is not the ruby, nor the glow of sunrise and sunset; it is the stream that throbs from the Fountain of life. "The life is in the blood." The fountain flows at Calvary, and it cleanseth from sin.

The whitest thing in the world is not ivory, nor alabaster, nor molten silver, nor a lily painted on a spotless wall; it is holiness, as set forth in the figure of the driven snow, whose whiteness is not superficial, but through and through; and of the white solar ray, in which the primary colors of the spectrum are gathered into one; and of "the fine linen clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints."

And the greatest thing in the world is what?

Love! Not our love toward God, but God's love toward us, as manifested in Christ: the love that holds the hyssop branch of our frail faith and with it sprinkles the blood upon the soul defiled with the blackness of sin until it becomes as white as snow. Such is the singular alchemy of grace. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; and without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

It remains to read one other message of the snow; and this in the province of Universal History.

"When the Almighty scattered kings therein, it was as when it snoweth in Zalmon" (Psalm 68: 14). Here is history *plus* prophecy: and this is as it should be, since no history can be universal unless it discerns the end from the beginning. This is the picture: A mountain-side swept bare by the wind, with white masses driven hither and hither upon it. What does it mean? These are not snowdrifts; they are bones of the slain, bleaching in the sun; they are shields of the mighty, ermine cloaks and royal mantles cast away in flight. There has been a mighty rout. God's enemies have been put down. The white squadron came forth, with One at its head arrayed in a garment dipped in blood; and, behold, Armageddon is over! There are shouts of victory: "Babylon is fallen!" And here, on the embattled field of Zalmon, the scene is like a plain of drifted snow.

This is the end; the consummation of all. The Word has accomplished its work. Was it not so

foretold? "His Word shall not return void; but it shall be like the snow which cometh down from heaven; it shall accomplish that which he doth please and prosper in the thing whereto he sent it."

In the Divine economy all things have their uses. Every snowflake is under commission. So am I, so are you. The secret of success in life is to know our commission and fulfill it. All things in God's universe, except the children of men, are in harmony with the law of their being. Man alone has swung out of his orbit and lives in defiance of the Divine will; he is out of harmony with the universal order by reason of sin. The purpose of God in sending his only-begotten Son into the world was to bring man back to his normal place in the realm of duty. He who clasps hands with Christ comes to himself, and finds the lost chord of life's symphony in the saying that is written, "The chief end of man is to glorify God."

8. *PRAYER*

> O God, open thou my heart and understanding to the lessons of thy love. Help me to hear whenever and wherever thou speakest —in Nature, in Providence, or in Grace. Take away my sins and establish me in righteousness, for the sake of Him who hath redeemed me with his precious blood. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "There is a Fountain filled with blood."

10. *BENEDICTION*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

TWENTY-FIFTH SERVICE

The Prayers of David

1. *INVOCATION*

O LORD, help me to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Be pleased to hallow this hour, consecrating it to thy glory and my good. Suffer not the cares of the world to interrupt, in any measure, my communion with thee. Give me some new and helpful thought of thy loving-kindness in Jesus Christ. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "Father, whate'er of earthly bliss."

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Psalm 72.
Matthew 7:7-29.

4. *PRAYER*

I bring thee, O gracious God and Saviour, my sins and sorrows, praying that thou wilt deal graciously with me. Thou art mighty to save unto the uttermost all that come unto thee; be pleased to extend unto me the scepter of thy pardoning grace and say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Thou hast power to heal all infirmities; heal mine, I pray thee. This

I ask in a filial spirit, remembering that thou knowest best what is good for me. Give me patience in suffering, and enable me ever to remember those who are more deeply afflicted. Look with compassion on all the sick and suffering, and remember especially those who are without God and without hope. Of whatever else I am deprived, I have thee; but there are multitudes who know thee not. O thou seeking Christ, go out into the far country and bring them home. Send thy Church on eager feet to carry the Gospel to those who perish in the night. Bless all men and nations. Keep our dear country true to the faith of the Fathers. Bless all in authority; may they rule in righteousness, and bring their honor and glory unto thee. For thou, O Christ, hast upon thy vesture and thy thigh a name written "King of kings and Lord of lords." Rule thou in righteousness over all the earth; for thy Name's sake. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "Must Jesus bear the cross alone?"

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

The Prayers of David

"The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended." (Psalm 72: 20.)

IN a house of cedar on the slope of Mount

Moriah, the King sat dictating to his scribe. The last of his formal prayers was about to be recorded for the benefit of those coming after him.

The prayers of David which have been transmitted to us in Scripture are singular in two particulars. On the one hand they were inspired, so that he "spake as he was moved by the Spirit of God." On the other hand they were pervaded by the Messianic hope. It runs like a golden thread through all his litany; the coming of the long-expected Seed of Woman, who was to "bruise the serpent's head" and save the people from their sins.

David was a man of prayer, wherefore he was also a man of power. "Prayer moves the hand that moves the world." It is recorded of David that he was "a man after God's own heart," which means that he was on intimate and influential terms with God.

He had known God in his boyhood, when watching his flocks in the fields; and the memory of God's majesty in the starlit heavens and of his watch-care in the green pastures and by the still waters was ever with him. In the vicissitudes of his troubled reign, and when driven from his throne and hunted like a partridge among the mountains, he found his strength and refuge in converse with God.

To Shemaiah the scribe he is now saying, "Set down a prayer for Solomon my son; it shall be the last of my recorded prayers." It begins on this wise: "Give the King thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the King's son. He will

judge thy people with righteousness and thy poor with judgment." But presently the King sees beyond Solomon; a vision comes to him of that greater Son of David, whose dominion was to be forever and ever: and his prayer merges into praise of the Messianic reign; "In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace, till the moon be no more. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; like showers that water the earth. There shall be abundance of grain in the earth upon the top of the mountains, the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon. All nations shall be blessed in him. Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things: And blessed be his glorious name forever! And let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen." The tremulous voice of the King is hushed. His last prayer is written; and the scribe adds sadly, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended."

Was he right? It was true that David would lead the Temple service no more. In that sense his prayers were ended. But would not those prayers go on? The minstrel's song may be hushed, but its echoes will ring through many a palace hall. The voice of the orator dies out, but the armies of coming centuries shall keep time to it. A child in the kindergarten toils at his A, B, C's until he comes to Z, and feels that his task is ended then. But one letter still remains; the letter that we used to call "and so forth"; and this sends out

the alphabet into all his future life; so that he frames his character and influence by it.

Amen is not *finis;* but "and so forth." Its meaning is "So be it," which is another way of saying, "Let my prayer go on."

I. *To every prayer of David there was a Sequel.* The momentary touch of a petitioner with God produces a state of mind that amply justifies the act of prayer, were nothing further to come of it. In India they say, "If you think of Buddha, you will be transformed into him." No man can kneel before the true God, in a sincere act of communion, without rising from his knees a better man.

But while this reflex influence of prayer is immensely important, it is far from being the only result. An answer must be taken into the reckoning; for God is the hearer and answerer of prayer. His promises are Yea and Amen. The Bible is full of these promises, and the personal experience of God's people is full of their Yea and Amen. It must be assumed that a promise like this, "Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you," means something. The word is not "if" or "peradventure" or "maybe," but "shall"; and God means it. The life of David is in evidence: "I sought the Lord, and he heard me."—"I sought him and he delivered me from all my fears."—"Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

The secret of successful prayer is expectant faith.

"Whatsoever things ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them." Let him who, in the weariness of the long night, cries, "Would God it were morning!" go to his eastern window and look forth expecting to see the glimmer of the breaking day.

II. *The Prayers of David were perpetuated, also, in the form of a Bequest to those coming after him.*

The Psalter was his Book of Prayer; and, after he slept with his fathers, it became the Prayer Book of Israel. The nation wept at his funeral, because his heart had ceased its beating, and they should hear his voice no more; but his prayers were still heard in the public service of the Temple. One of them was repeated at the dedication of the Temple, and another when the Ark was brought into the Holy Place: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of glory may come in!" These prayers were used continuously in public service until the time when all open vision ceased and the lights of the golden candlestick went out. Ah, if the people had only preserved their Messianic hope! But they forgot! And when the "Son of David came, they hid, as it were, their faces from him."

At the beginning of the Christian era the disciples of Jesus caught up those prayers and have kept them ringing through the ages. The song of the Virgin Mother of Christ, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," was a devout echo of the thirty-

fourth Psalm. The song of the Church in its first persecution began with the words of the second Psalm: "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?" The Covenanters of Scotland, hiding in their conventicles, awoke the echoes of the hills with the twenty-third Psalm:

> The Lord's my shepherd; I'll not want;
> He makes me down to lie
> In pastures green; he leadeth me
> The quiet waters by.—
> My table thou hast furnished
> In presence of my foes!
> My head with oil thou dost anoint
> And my cup overflows!

In the dark days of the Reformation in Germany, when Luther was a refugee at Erfurt, he said to Melanchthon, "Come, Philip, let us have the forty-sixth Psalm"; and they sang together, "God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble: therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." In the wars of the English Commonwealth the Roundheads entered battle with Cromwell "raising the tune" of the sixty-eighth Psalm: "Let God arise; let his enemies be scattered. Let them also that hate him flee before him! As smoke is driven away, so drive them away! As wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God!" The hymnology of the Christian Church is full of the prayers of David: they will keep their place in the pub-

lic service of the sanctuary until the Millennium shall dawn to the music of the Old Hundredth:

> Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
> Praise him all creatures here below;
> Praise him above, ye heavenly host;
> Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost!

Oh, no; the prayers of David were not concluded when his voice died out. The masterpiece of Leonardo da Vinci was painted on the convent wall of Santa Maria in Milan four hundred years ago; and meanwhile it has been so often retouched that probably not a vestige of the original picture remains; but copies of it remain in galleries all over the world and on ten thousand cottage walls to certify that Leonardo's work was not finished when he laid down his brush. In like manner all true prayers repeat themselves along the ages.

III. *Nor must we overlook the Postscript to David's Prayers.*

This is referred to in the vision of John the Evangelist, where he says: "I beheld and lo the four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." The prayers of David were thus preserved to be offered, like those of all saints, as a perpetual oblation before the throne of God.

Nor is this all. David himself, after three thousand years in heaven, is still praying on. I do not believe that "prayer will be lost in praise." I decline to sing:

Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer,
May I thy consolation share
Till from Mount Pisgah's lofty height
I view my home and take my flight.

This robe of flesh I'll drop, and rise
To seize the everlasting prize,
And shout, while passing through the air,
"Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer!"

On entering heaven we shall not bid farewell to prayer. For what is prayer? It is making known to God our wants. We shall have wants in heaven, but every want will be supplied. And our deepest wants will not be selfish, but in behalf of those whom we have loved and cherished. Are not the saints triumphant, all "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them that are heirs of salvation"? Can there be a ministry without a want behind it? Are the friends who have gone to heaven before us indifferent to our needs, and can they not intercede for us? It is true that our One Mediator is Jesus Christ the Righteous, who ever liveth to make intercession for us. It is true also that we have no means of communication with our friends in heaven. But they are intimate with Christ, and they have the same love and interest in us. No doubt David is as deeply concerned as ever in the welfare of his people; and, if so, his great prayer, his prayer without ceasing, is that the veil that hides the vision of Messiah may be removed from their eyes, so that they may behold in Jesus the real Messiah of God.

Wherefore, let us pray on. And let us pray with an assurance that our prayers will go on forever. Did the sacerdotal prayer of Jesus for his disciples in the upper room come to an end when he said, "Arise, let us go hence"? Was the prayer of John Knox, "O God! give me Scotland or I die," finished with an Amen? Ask the people of Scotland; and they will tell you that it echoes through the Land of the Heather to this day.

A seafaring man, gray and burdened with years, arose in the Fulton Street Meeting and said, "I have come here to bear witness to the power of my mother's prayers. I ran away from home in my boyhood; but I took with me the memory of the last night when she tucked me in with a kiss, and said, 'God bless you, my boy!' Ah, that was long ago; but her 'God bless you!' has followed me through all the years and has brought me home at last. I never saw her face again; but I want to testify to-day to the power of her prayers. I want to consecrate myself to the service of my mother's God."

Pray on! Our prayers shall never end. It was seventy years ago that a little lass on her death bed murmured, "Now I lay me down to sleep." An old man of ninety and his wife of eighty-six still live to bear tribute to the lasting influence of that prayer; for never a night has passed, in all the intervening years, when they have not knelt down together and said:

Now I lay me down to sleep;
I pray thee, Lord, my soul to keep.

Pray on! Pray on! There is a mighty power in prayer. It has divided seas and made the sun stand still: it has brought bread from heaven and water out of the rock; it has closed the windows of the sky and opened them again; it has quenched the fires of persecution and marshaled the stars to battle; it has broken gates of iron and called the dead from their graves. Pray on, therefore. Pray on!

More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of:—
For so the whole round world is, every way,
Bound with gold chains about the feet of God.

8. *PRAYER*

Lord, teach me how to pray. Bring me into such a sweet and perfect oneness with thyself that even my sense of personal need shall be lost in the joyous and wondering contemplation of thy gracious Plans and Purposes as revealed in Christ. So baptize me with the influence of thy Spirit that my whole life shall be hidden with Christ in thee. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "From every stormy wind that blows."

10. *BENEDICTION*

God be with thee and bless thee, and cause his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. Amen.

TWENTY-SIXTH SERVICE

The Number of Our Days

1. *INVOCATION*

O God, Light of the World, shine thou with the joy of the morning into my heart. Let me behold thy face in peace, and have sweet communion with thee. Receive me into the secret place of thy Pavilion, and refresh me with thy tender mercies; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

2. *HYMN:* "Come, thou Almighty King!"

3. *SCRIPTURE LESSON*

Psalm 90.
Revelation 22.

4. *PRAYER*

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the world: Yea, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. My breath is in my nostrils, but eternity is the measure of thy life.

I spend my years as a tale that is told. To-day, to-morrow, and behold the place that knew me shall know me no more. But, blessed be thy Name, I shall still live on. Death is only a covered bridge, leading from light to light through a brief darkness. I shall close my eyes, and when I awake I shall be still with thee. Help me so to spend the residue of my time that I may be ready for what awaits me. For I know that life here is only probationary. The character I am forming is the house I must live in forever. The work I am doing is but a tentative one, that must needs fit or unfit me for promotion to thy higher work. Wherefore help me to take heed unto my way. Enable me to live day by day as in the great Taskmaster's eye. Create in me a clean heart for Jesus' sake, and renew within me a right spirit. Sanctify me by thine own indwelling Spirit, and make me faithful in service day by day. Let a like blessing come upon all who love thee. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion. Draw in with thy Cords of Mercy the wandering and impenitent, that they may seek salvation and rejoice in thee. Hear and answer, for Jesus' sake; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory forever. Amen.

5. *HYMN:* "Jesus, lover of my soul."

6. *OFFERING*

7. *THE SERMON*

The Number of Our Days

A New Year Sermon

"So teach us to number our days, that we may get us a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90: 12.)

WHY should Moses ask for wisdom? He was a graduate of the University of On and "skilled in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." There was one branch of learning, however, that was not in the University Curriculum—to wit, Macrobiology; that is, the art of living long and usefully. This was something which God alone could teach, wherefore Moses prays to him, "So teach us."

So far as Moses himself was concerned the prayer was *ex post facto,* as lawyers would say, inasmuch as he was bidding farewell to life. He was a hundred and twenty years old, but "his eye was undimmed and his natural force unabated." He was not going because he was worn out, but because the time had come for promotion. God called him to come up higher; and he was ready to go.

He was now looking back over the three forties of his life: the first of them spent in the palace of Egypt, the second in the desert of Midian watching his flocks, and the third in leading the stiff-necked children of Israel through the Wilderness

to the Promised Land. It was a long life, but it had passed like a dream; like a watch in the night; like a tale that is told. Its years had come and gone like the flying of a shuttle; the garment was finished, the loom was silent; the weaver rose and passed on.

It was not so much for himself that Moses offered this prayer as for his people and for those like ourselves, who were destined to repeat it long after he had gone his way.

But as to this numbering of our days: can it be done? Would we not be glad to do it?

Can Arithmetic help us? You are, perhaps, thirty years of age. Very well; multiply thirty by three hundred and sixty-five and there you have it. So far the process is as easy as for a farmer to number his sheep, or for a rich man to count his bonds and mortgages. But there is something left over. What about that? Can we number the days that await us?

You have simply made your computation up to date. Shall we add one? Not yet. In this world of ours a hundred thousand people die every day—ten every second! So before we add another day let us wait and see whether we hold out. We shall not know until we hear the clock strike twelve tonight; if perchance we do hear it. So the method fails; it stops short of the end.

Suppose, then, we try Algebra. Let "*x*" stand for the unknown factor in the problem of life; that is, for the days before us. The problem now is to

reduce that x to known terms. And everything depends upon it. We are making plans and dreaming dreams, building castles in the air; but all our hopes and ambitions depend for their realization on the value of that little x. The question is whether or no we shall live long enough to carry out our purposes. Alas, "the best-laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley."

I see a schoolboy at the blackboard. He writes, "x equals the number of my coming days." He keeps on working at that problem until the board is covered with figures: knits his brow and bends a little under his task; the hair above his temples is growing white; but still he reckons on; and just as he is nearing the answer, an interruption occurs: the bell strikes! It is four o'clock and school is out. The boy at the blackboard turns and makes his way through the doorway into the Great Open. He is an old man now, weary with the burdens of life. He turns and looks backward; the answer to the problem is there on the blackboard; but alas, it is too late for him to profit by it!

But perhaps Geometry will help us. The literal meaning of the word geometry is world-measurement. It is the measurement of things in terms of time and space. It has to do specifically with lines, areas and bulks. Its work is done in three dimensions only. But suppose there should be another world, where lines, areas and bulks play little or no part? Suppose there should turn out to be a fourth dimension of which, as yet, we know noth-

ing? Space is one of the concomitants of time; but when time is no longer, what then?

The propositions of Euclid end with *Quod erat demonstrandum*. But those demonstrations are in world measurements only. They traverse a mere infinitesimal arc of an Infinite Circle. What is proved for time may not hold for eternity. Cæsar says, "I have my crown!" So much seems to be proved; but let Cæsar wait until he sees whether his crown is on fast or not. Rothschild says, "I have my fortune!" but before that fact is assured he must wait to see whether or not his fortune will ultimately sift through his cold fingers like dust. We conclude, therefore, that no world measurements can enable us to number our days or estimate the things which the impenetrable veil of the future hides from us.

How then about the Scientific Method? It is affirmed that in these days everything must be tested by "the scientific method."

The scientist in the province of Macrobiology is the Actuary of a Life Insurance Company. It is his business to calculate the probable duration of life. But there is a difficulty here, arising from the fact that his calculations are made on a basis of averages, and an averge gives cold comfort in an individual case. The man of thirty, for example, applies for a policy. He is put through a physical examination to see whether his heart, liver, and lungs are in good order. He is then asked how old his parents and grandparents were when they died.

If it is found that he is in sound health and comes of a long-lived family, he is pronounced a good risk and the policy is made out. It is calculated that having lived to be thirty he will probably live to be sixty; and if he gets past fifty he will probably live until eighty; but these are mere estimates, based on averages and expressed in terms of chance and probability. What the applicant wants, however, is not perhapses and peradventures, but an insurance of life. All that he really gets is the "if" of Moses' prayer: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore years, yet is their pride but labor and sorrow; for it is soon gone and we fly away."

And even if the man should live out the full measure of the actuary's calculation, it is still not he but his heirs who are insured. There is indeed no such thing as "life insurance." The thing is a misnomer. What is really insured is not my life, but my bequest in case of death. When my policy falls due, I shall not be here to collect it.

All that remains, then, is the Philosophical Method. The literal meaning of philosophy is "the love of wisdom"; and the prayer of Moses is a philosophic prayer, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom"; that is, so that we may live as becometh wise men.

In this case the method of computation is briefly comprehended in the word "so." In this we are given to understand that there is a way of numbering our days so that the computation shall enable

us to live wisely and well. God, as the Source of wisdom, can alone instruct us in this matter; and we find the instruction in his Word, which was given expressly to lead us in the right way.

First, *it teaches us that to live wisely we must number our days one by one.* Jesus said, "Take no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." In those words we have an effectual safeguard against care and worry. To-day is ours; to-morrow is God's; wherefore, "Make a little fence around to-day, and therein stay."

The day in which I am now living is like the narrow pass at Thermopylæ, where Leonidas and his three hundred withstood an army with the cry, "Keep back the Persians!" So let us stand each in his place, to-day, keeping back the cares of the morrow. Let us borrow no trouble. Let us cross no bridges until we come to them.

> Happy the man, and happy he alone,
> He who can call today his own;
> He who, secure within, can say,
> Tomorrow do thy worst, for I have lived today!

And why not? God never gives us two days at once and the days never overlap. Wherefore, the part of wisdom is to offer the prayer of Augustine, "Let me live this day, O Lord, as if I were never to have another day."

Secondly, *we are Divinely advised to remember that there are only twenty-four hours in the day.*

For each day practically closes at the setting of the sun. Jesus said, "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day; for the night cometh when no man can work."

Work for the night is coming,
Work through the sunny noon:
Fill brightest hours with labor;
Rest comes sure and soon.
Give every flying minute
Something to keep in store:
Work for the night is coming,
When man's work is o'er.

A day has been likened to a stairway of twenty-four steps, of which each step crumbles as we leave it. The hour that is gone is past recovery; and so of the day that is gone—gone forever!

The lost days of my life, until to-day—
What were they, could I see them on the street
Lie where they fell? Would they be ears of wheat
Sown once for food but trodden into clay?
Or golden coins squandered and still to pay?
Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet?
Or such spilt water as in dreams must cheat
The throats of men in hell?
I do not see them here: but after death,
God knows, I know the faces I shall see:
Each one a murdered self saying, with last breath:
"I am thyself; what hast thou done to me?"

Thirdly, *it is the part of wisdom to remember that a year has only three hundred and sixty-five days.* And the last year of life has not its full quota. Jesus said, "Watch, therefore; for ye know

neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh."

A year lost is like a casket of priceless treasure thrown into a fathomless sea. "My millions for an inch of time!" cried Queen Elizabeth on her death bed; but the wealth of all the royal exchequers of the world could not buy back for her the minutest fraction of an inch of time. Wherefore, if thou hast aught to do, do it now.

> Improve time in time, while time doth last;
> For all time is no time, when time is past.

Fourthly, *wisdom teaches that the days of our years, few or many, are steps leading on to eternity.* And Jesus said, "Well done, good servant! Thou hast been faithful. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

As the tree falleth, so also it shall lie. At the dead line is written, "He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy let him be filthy still; and he that is holy let him be holy still; and he that is righteous let him be righteous still." We are building character here and now; and character is the house in which we must live.

Time is only a means to an end. We are not really living now, but only preparing for life. Time, energy, and earthly possessions are assets to be invested for the eternal ages. We are not only building character in these prefatory years, but are learning how to do things, so that when the hour of promotion comes we may be fit for usefulness in the future life.

The old year is gone! Its days are numbered. But "God requireth the past." There is to be a roll-call. What shall we answer for the year that has ended? Was it a good year for us? Are we glad to review it? Did we so number its days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom? Or are we crying, "Have mercy, Lord! O Lord, forgive!" Blessed be his Name: he is ready to forgive. We may enter upon the incoming year with a clean record if we will. For the blood of Christ "cleanseth from all sin."

On the upward road of the Jungfrau, not long ago, I passed through the village of Grindenwald, where the eastern Alps tower so high that the townspeople never see the morning sun. Yet they are not without the beauty of the sunrise; for at the break of every day they see its glory reflected in the west. So, looking backward now, we may see a blessed future reflected in the pardoning grace of God, and even in the mislived past may find an assurance of the breaking of an endless day.

The New Year is before us. Let us begin aright, with simple trust in God. He who sets out as on a personally conducted tour, with the Saviour as his Guide, shall go safely on. For Christ knows the way. He has been through the future as through the past. His life is "from everlasting to everlasting." He knows the dangers and pitfalls before us. If you will get hold of his hand, my friend, and hold fast you can not go wrong. His

promise is "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end."

So on I go, not knowing.
I would not if I might:
I'd rather walk in the dark with him
Than go alone in the light:
I'd rather walk by faith with him
Than go alone by sight.

I wish you a Happy New Year—a year of close and intimate friendship with Christ; a year of faithful service in doing good, as you have opportunity, unto all men; a year of unswerving devotion to truth and righteousness; of loyalty to Him who died for us, yet liveth now and evermore!

8. *PRAYER*

O God, teach me so to number my days that I may apply my heart unto Wisdom. Thou knowest the measure of my life; help me to measure it in terms of daily faithfulness. Help me to live to-day so as to be ready for to-morrow, whether in time or eternity. Be thou my Guide through all my pilgrimage until the day break and the shadows flee away, and I awake in the likeness of Christ. Amen.

9. *HYMN:* "Guide me, O thou great Jehovah!"

10. *BENEDICTION*

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your heart and mind in the knowledge of God and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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